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THE EARLY HISTORY
OF THE
English Woollen Industry.

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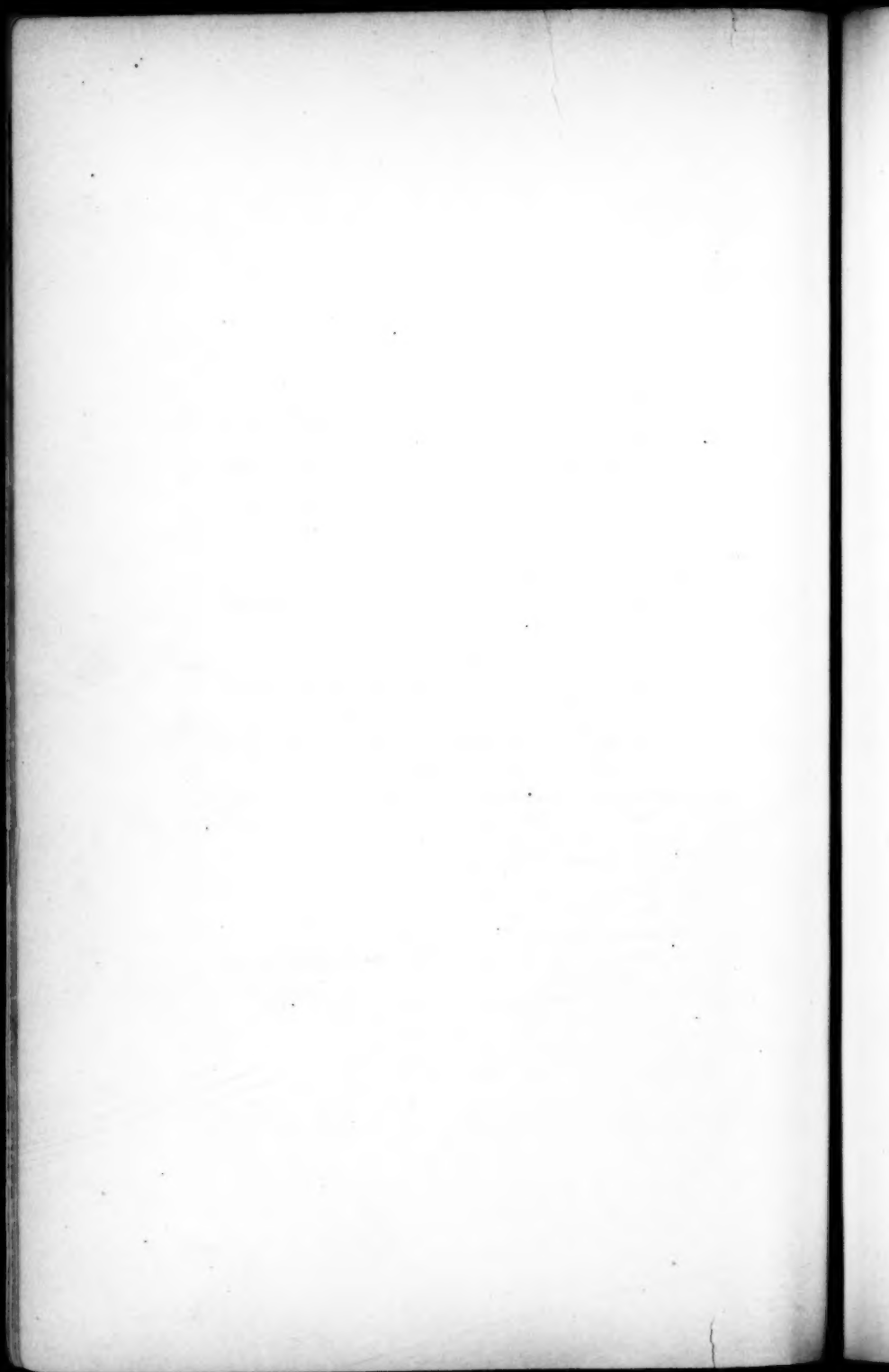
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PREFACE.

The following essay has grown out of a paper read before the Oxford Economic Society in the January of this year. It deals with a strictly limited subject: it does not, save incidentally, touch the history of the raw material, its production, quality and price; nor that of the finished article after it has passed into the hands of the dealers. It is with the intermediate stages that we are here concerned—the position, organization, relations among themselves, of those actually engaged in the manufacture.

I cannot but be sensible of the honor which the American Economic Association have done me by permitting me to join in their work. American economic writing is attracting increasing attention from the younger generation of Englishmen; they look to America to contribute in the future far more largely to the solution of social problems than is possible for the mother country. For the United States have obvious advantages, both in the material they offer and in their means for dealing with that material. In the first place, that country exhibits the forces of competition and capital working on a larger scale than elsewhere, and in a freer field, uncrossed by any of the influences of decaying feudalism. Hence the importance to Europe as well as to America of the questions which are forcing themselves to the front in the United States—such questions as those of Rings and Monopolies, of Railway

Management, of Labor Societies, of Large and Small Farming. Karl Marx, twenty years ago, described England as the classic land of capitalist production ; that is a title that no longer belongs to her.

In the second place, while in England political economy has altogether lost the ear of the public, and its official teachers may be counted on the fingers of one hand, in the United States it is a subject of increasing interest to the educated world, and the professors of the many colleges and the officers of the statistical bureaus form a considerable body of competent investigators. The zeal of American students has sent them to the German universities, whence they have brought back a new enthusiasm and a new method. Yet from the dangers of servile imitation they are freed by their position. Not even the absurd exaggerations of German writers themselves can obscure the fact that it is from Germany that the impulse has come in our own time to a new and more fruitful development in Economics. But certainly no observer of German thought can fail to see that, though most vigorous within its range, its range is exceedingly narrow. German writers seldom realize the atmosphere of individual initiative in which English and American thought moves ; and while they are acquainted with the latest doctoral dissertation, they are often totally ignorant of all English economical work since Mill's *Principles*. But American teachers will be compelled, by the traditions of their country, the needs of their pupils, and the criticisms of their opponents, to give due weight to the forces of competition and to the arguments of the more recent English economists. Thus a body of men are beginning to appear

as familiar with Cairnes and Bagehot as with Knies and Schmoller, with Bismarck's legislation as with Trades-Unionism and Coöperation.

The "new school" in America has had the best of all testimony to its stimulating qualities in the grave rebukes with which it has been met. This is not the place to speak of the criticisms which have been directed against the claim of "the new Political Economy" to an *ethical* character, or against its insistence on the functions of the *state*. So far as the *historical* method, however, is concerned, it must be said that there seems some danger lest the real character of the divergence of opinion should escape attention in unnecessary contentions about preliminaries. The question at issue between the deductive and historical economists is not that of the truth or falsehood of the main Ricardian doctrines. There is a difference of emphasis, a difference of tone, but not a difference in ultimate belief concerning them. From the side of the abstract economists it is now freely granted that these doctrines are only hypothetically true, that they are true only so far as certain conditions are granted. From the other side, however much disposition there may be to deny that the conditions are ever completely realized, it is confessed that so far as they are realized the doctrines based upon them are true. To continue fighting upon this ground is only to slay the slain. Where the real divergence begins is upon the question what use is to be made of these doctrines, which after all every economist accepts and accepts in the same sense. The "orthodox" say: "True, they do not exactly correspond with real life, but they express tendencies far greater than any other. The proper course

to pursue is to work them out to their farthest consequences; and then, by introducing additional considerations, we shall see how these modify our conclusions, until finally we shall get results which will tally with facts." The historical economist, on the other hand, argues that the actual state of affairs in every particular industry, trade, country, and how it came to be so, is best discovered by historical and statistical inquiry—an inquiry in which the old doctrines will furnish a useful standard of comparison, and in some cases suggest influences that have been at work, but in which they will after all play a quite subordinate part.

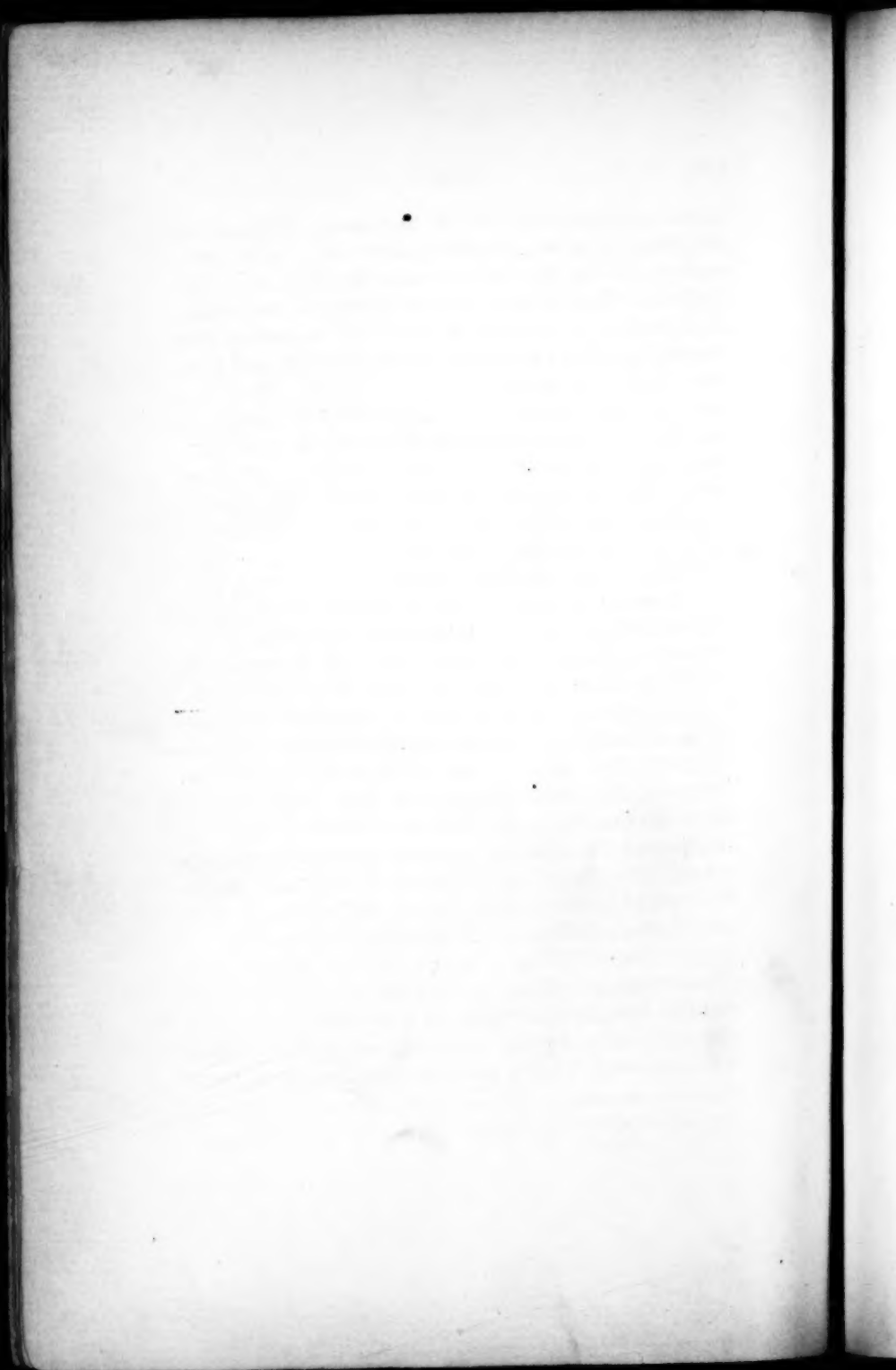
What is most wanted at this moment is that each side should frankly and ungrudgingly recognize the right of the other to try the opposite method. No doubt, in the heat of revolt, rebels have spoken violently, and have denounced the deductive method and all its works. This is hardly to be wondered at when it is remembered that the political economy most influential in England and America during this century has been that taught by McCulloch and Senior. But the orthodox economist of to-day no longer thinks that he is in possession of a body of truths applicable to all times and places; and he is even too anxious to point out that he does not claim to give practical advice. The historian, therefore, will do well to acknowledge that deduction is a defensible method, and to leave the believer in abstract economics to justify his argumentation by its results.

But it is time that it should be recognized from the other side that, for good or evil, there is an increasing body of economic investigators who are likely to

remain unmoved by all the arguments which, from the time of *some unsettled questions*, have been used to prove that deduction is the only scientific method. They believe that by historical and statistical inquiry it is possible for them to arrive at a knowledge of the economic life of the past and present which will be of service to society. They are not content with the concession that the historical material they gather may be of use for the "illustration and verification of economic truth;" they believe it has an independent value of its own. If they are wise they will neither patronize nor be patronized, but will ask for a fair field.

There is one question, indeed, that is often put, and deserves an answer: Can historical and statistical inquiry discover economic *truth*, economic *laws*? This is another illustration of the hold that the Ricardian political economy has taken on men's minds. For by "truth" is here meant, unconsciously perhaps, a number of neat abstract propositions, professing to explain large bodies of phenomena, such as "Rent is the excess of the return of a piece of land above that on the worst land in cultivation." Truth of this sort the historical method is not likely to discover; the history of agriculture will help us to understand present agricultural difficulties, but it will scarcely produce a formula professing to be a "law of rent." But if by "truth" is meant such generalizations about the condition of things now and the direction in which they are going, as are of practical value to the politician or philanthropist, then historical inquiry has discovered truth, and will discover yet more.

LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD,
August 8, 1887.



THE EARLY HISTORY

OF THE

ENGLISH WOOLLEN INDUSTRY.

I.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GUILD SYSTEM.

The history of English wool and cloth has a two-fold interest: it explains the origin of the wealth of England, and it illustrates, with peculiar clearness, the development of industry. In the latter middle ages wool was the one important article of export from England, an article of which that country practically enjoyed the monopoly, so that its control formed a most powerful weapon of diplomacy, and its taxation was an easy resource for our kings. But England was not content, thus, to furnish Europe with the raw material; its government made continuous and strenuous efforts to gain for it the manufacture also, and its measures succeeded. Cloth became "the basis of our wealth;"¹ and at the end of the seventeenth century, woollen goods were "two-thirds of England's exports."²

Still more interesting is the woollen industry from the point of view of the economist. Food and clothes are the two primary necessities of human life, and play a correspondingly important part in social history. It is significant that the bakers and

¹ Bishop Berkeley, in 1737, quoted in Toynbee, *Industrial Revolution*, 46.

² Davenant, *Of Gain in Trade*, (1699), 47.

weavers stand side by side in the earliest notices of craft guilds in England.¹ No one who is acquainted with mediæval legislation needs be reminded of the care with which the public authorities supervised the sale of corn and bread. But bread could only be made in comparatively small quantities; it could not be made for a distant or for a far-future market. This, of course, was equally true of all articles of food, before the creation of modern means of rapid transit; and since the "division of labor is limited by the extent of the market,"² it was not in food that any considerable manufacturing development could take place. With clothing material it was far different. A necessary, but a necessary which would "keep," it was the very first article for the manufacture of which a special body of craftsmen came into existence. And from the first, a strong tendency towards further specialization showed itself among those employed in the industry. Wherever the conditions were favorable, especially in the supply of the raw material, the manufacture soon came to supply a more than merely local demand; and this not only encouraged that division of processes which had been early seen to be advantageous, but tended also to create a class of dealers as distinguished from the actual makers.

To these causes it was due that the woollen manufacture was the first to take the form of the guild, and the first to break through its limits; that it became the most widely spread of the "domestic" industries, and therefore that in which the factory

¹ Madox, *History of the Exchequer*, 231.

² Cf. J. S. Mill, *Pol. Econ.* B. 1, Ch. viii, § 6.

system gained its most hardly-won and signal victory.

We are unable to trace the existence in England of a separate craft of weavers, further back than the early part of the twelfth century.¹ Before this time, all the cloth that a family required was made by the members of the family, doubtless in the winter evenings, when there was a forced cessation of agricultural labor. In France and Germany it is on the estates of the monasteries and great nobles that we find the earliest examples of groups of men whose main occupation was weaving;² and it is not impossible that the same was the case in England; but of this we have no evidence.

In the middle of the twelfth century, however, guilds of weavers are found established in several of the larger English towns. The one Exchequer account, or Pipe Roll, earlier than the reign of Henry II., which has been preserved, and which is now generally assigned to the thirty-first year of Henry I., records payments to the King by Robert son of Leofstan on behalf of the guild of weavers of London, by the sheriff of Lincolnshire on behalf of the guild of weavers of Lincoln, and by the weavers of Oxford on behalf of their own guild.³ The Pipe Rolls of the early years of Henry II. shew that guilds of weavers existed also in Winchester, Huntingdon and Notting-

¹None of the later crafts, except *autores* and *pistores*, are mentioned in Alfric's *Colloquy*, of the later part of tenth century. (Wright's *A.S. Vocab.* ed. Wülcker, p. 90); nor are weavers mentioned in *Domesday Book*, (v. Abstract of Population, in Ellis' *Introd.* ii. 511.

²Schmoller, *Strassburger Tucher*—u. *Weberzunft*, 361, 380. Fagniez. *Etudes sur l'industrie à Paris au xiii^e et au xiv^e siècle*, 3.

³*Rotulum Magnum Pipe*, (Record Comm. Ed. 1833) 144, 109, 2.

ham, and a guild of fullers at Winchester;¹ and from a writ of Henry III. we learn that there was a guild of weavers at York also, in the reign of Henry II.² The payments to the Exchequer were annual; and, for all we know, the guilds may have been in existence and these payments may have been made for some years before 1130. That the weavers were deemed to be among "the dangerous classes" is shewn, not only by the attacks of the town magnates which will be referred to later, but also by the curious fact that scarcely are they mentioned in our documents before they give occasion to a council at Oxford to condemn a heresy of which they especially were guilty.³

Brentano's exaggerations as to the freedom of action of the craft-guilds have disposed some later writers to go to the opposite extreme, and to represent the guilds as mere instruments, and almost as creations, of the public authorities.⁴ It is indeed true that the guilds needed royal authorization. The annual payment was not merely a tax; it was the condition of their existence; and guilds which did not gain the king's sanction were amerced as "adulterine." This was the case in London in 1180 with the guilds of goldsmiths, pepperers, butchers and

¹ *The Great Rolls of the Pipe*, 2-4 H. ii. (ed. 1844) 39, 90, 153. For later years, v. Indices of ed. of each *Pipe Rolls* from five to ten H. ii. by Pipe Roll Society.

² *Close Rolls* (ed. 1833), i. 421.

³ "Henricus rex tenuit concilium apud Oxoniam, in quo damnata est hæresis *tezentium*," *Annals of Tewkesbury and Annals of Worcester. Annales Monastici*, (Rolls' Series) i. 49; iv. 381.

⁴ Brentano, *Essay on History of Guilds*, §4, (prefixed to *English Guilds*, Early Eng. Text Soc.), criticised in Ochenkowski, *England's Wirthschaftliche Entwicklung im ausgange des Mittelalters*, 55, 74-9.

some others.¹ It is true, moreover, that in the fourteenth century it became the policy of the government to extend the guild organization over the whole country, and to bring all craftsmen together in organized bodies. Yet it is clear that guilds came into existence at first quite voluntarily, and that this banding together of the craftsmen was regarded as somewhat revolutionary. In the fourteenth century, again, we certainly meet with elaborate regulations as to the action of the guild authorities, drawn up by parliament or municipalities. But in the earliest charters, such as those granted to the weavers of London and York by Henry II., the only definite provision was that which obliged all the men of the craft, in each particular district, to belong to the guild.² The importance of this obligation to join the guild—this *Zunft-zwang* as the Germans call it—cannot be overestimated; it turned what before had been private associations into organs of the state, and rendered possible the control of the whole industry by the government and the guild officers.³ But all other rights of the guild, whatever they may have been—and their extent was warmly

¹ Madox. *Exchequer*, 390.

² "Sciatis me concessisse Telariis Londoniarum Gildam suam, in Londoniis habendam, cum omnibus libertatibus quas habuerunt tempore Regis Henrici, avi mei; et ita quod nullus nisi per illos se intromittat infra civitatem de eo ministerio, et nisi sit de eorum Gilda, neque in Sudwerke, neque in aliis locis Londoniis pertinentibus." *Liber Custumarum*, 33, (vol. ii, of *Munimenta Gildhallæ*, Rolls' Series). In the case of York, no one was to make cloth in the county save with the consent of the weavers of that city. See writ of H. iii. ordering the sheriff to enforce this rule, in *Close Rolls* i. 421.

³ Cf. Schmoller, *Strass. Tu. W. Zunft*. 384-7. "Von der Absicht, ein wichtiges gewerbliches Vorrecht zu schaffen, war in der Hauptsache, jedenfalls bei den Webern, nicht die Rede." 385.

disputed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, —had grown up by custom, and were confirmed, without being specified, by the very recognition of the guild, just as those of *municipal* self-government were assented to by the recognition of a commune. The two phrases, "grant a gild" and "grant a commune,"¹ are exactly parallel, and point to the voluntary and spontaneous character of the association in each case.

The relations of the guilds to the governing bodies in the towns are extremely obscure, and have never yet been adequately investigated. This much at any rate is certain, that at first and for a long period the craftsmen were not citizens or burgesses; that the freemen of each town formed a comparatively small body, who watched the craft-guilds with exceeding jealousy, and excluded their members from all share in municipal government. How these two opposing bodies came into existence it is difficult to say. Maurer, in dealing with similar facts abroad, explains the burgher oligarchy as the descendants of the members of the old mark community.² The hereditary possession of land, it is readily seen, would give an economic superiority to the old families when a class of landless freemen began to grow up in the town. This writer has doubtless exaggerated the part which the mark played in social development; yet the importance in England of burgage tenure, and the fact that the freedom of a town is often described as attached to such a tenure, do

¹ Eg. *London*, "concesserunt civibus communam suam;" *Niort*, "concessimus quod burgenses faciant communam." Stubbs, *Select Charters*, 252, 313.

² *Geschichte der Städteverfassung* passim. See especially ii. 195.

seem to show that it was the possession of land which gave the old families their superiority. There is a significant entry in one of the Exchequer rolls of John recording the payment of a mark by David, the dyer, of Carlisle, in order that the messuage which he has in Carlisle may be a burgage, and that he may enjoy the same privileges as the burghers.¹

In municipal histories some space has often been given to the guild merchant, the *gilda mercatoria*. But this has hitherto been regarded as exceptional; it has only recently been shown that every town, with the doubtful exception of London, had a merchant guild.² Now the merchant guild certainly included the more important burghers, even if membership of the guild and burghership were not in all cases synonymous. It was in the reigns of Henry I. and Henry II. that the merchant guilds gained the sanction of the government; and so important did they become that the latter municipal organization can be best explained as due to the coalescence of the merchant guild and the local law court, the court leet. But the very *raison d'être* of the merchant guild was to secure for its members a monopoly of the trade of the district.³ We have here, then, another cause of antagonism between the burgher aristocracy and the craftsmen. Interwoven with the efforts of the narrow body of burghers to keep in their own hands the government of the town, are the efforts of

¹ "David Tinctore reddit compotum de i marca, Per sic quad Masagium sum quod habet in Kaerleolo sit Burgagium, et quod ipse habeat easdem Libertates quas alii Burgenses de Kaerleolo." Maddox. *Exchequer*, 278.

² Especially by Gross. (*Gilda Mercatoria*) Göttingen, 1883.

³ Cf. Stubbs. *Const. Hist.* i, § 131. (Lib. ed. p. 474.)

the traders to control the weavers in the exercise of their craft, and to secure for themselves the monopoly of the *sale* of the cloth.

A great authority has warned us not to be too hasty in supposing that the relations of classes in the English towns were similar to those on the continent.¹ But abroad, the antagonism between the old trading families and the artisan guilds is the capital fact in mediæval municipal history; and it will therefore be necessary to enter with some detail into the evidence which seems to prove that somewhat the same state of things was to be found in England. Of much the most importance are certain entries in the *London Book of Customs*²—"the Law of the Weavers and Fullers of Winchester, of the same at Marlborough, of the same at Oxford, and of the same at Beverley." They are not dated, and their position between entries relating to the twenty-sixth and twenty-fifth years of Edward I. may be no more than accidental. Their presence is easily explained: in one of its many contests with the weavers and fullers the London municipal government must have thought it would strengthen its case if it were able to refer to the way in which the craftsmen were treated elsewhere, and must have applied to the magistrates of these four towns for copies of their rules. These rules represent the artisans as in so depressed a condition that they must be assigned to the early part of the thirteenth century; and it is to be noted that we have not to deal here with royal charters, but with records of what the burgher aristocracy thought their rights.

¹ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i, 474-5; iii, 635. (Lib. ed.)

² 60, 130-1. Riley, *Introd.* lxi.

The first thing that strikes us in these "laws" is the sharpness of the distinction which is drawn between the craftsman and the freeman, "*franke homme*," of the town. No freeman could be accused by a weaver or fuller; nor could an artisan even give evidence against one.¹ If a craftsman becomes so rich that he wants to become a freeman, he must forswear his craft, get rid of all his tools from his house, and then, when he has satisfied the magistrates, he may enter into the freedom, "*la franchise*."² No weaver or fuller might go outside the town to sell his own cloth, and so interfere with the monopoly of the burghers;³ nor was he allowed to sell it to any stranger or to any one except a merchant of the town.⁴ In some places, doubtless, the weavers received yarn from merchant-employers and returned it to them made up into cloth; so in the case of Marlborough, it is laid down that no one shall weave or work save for the good men (*prudes-hommes*) *i. e.* "burgesses of the town." In others, as at Oxford, the weaver worked up yarn of his own; but even in this case he must have the consent of the good men before he can carry on his craft. At

¹ "Ne nul franke homme ne puet estre atteint par telier ne par fulour; ne il ne poent tesmoign porter," in almost identical words in each case.

² Winchester, Marlborough and Beverly. This is precisely the same as in Bruges and Damme, and all the towns of Flanders and N. France, belonging to the House of London; cf. Ashley, *James and Philip van Artevelde*, 18.

³ "Ceo est a savoir, qe nul telier ne nul fuloun ne puet drap secchir ne teindre, ne a nul marchaundise hors de la ville aller" at Winchester and Beverly.

⁴ "Il ne poent a nul forein lour draps vendre, fors as marchauns de la cite." Winchester.

Marlborough, the "law" goes so far as to direct that the craftsmen shall not possess any property above the value of a penny, except what is necessary in his occupation, and five ells of cloth for his year's clothes. But this is probably rather the view of the burghers as to what should be the case than a rule actually enforced, and may be compared with the passage in which Glanvill declares that a villain is absolutely incapable of holding any property whatever.¹

It might be argued that these entries represent throughout only the ideal of the burgher oligarchy, and never corresponded with actual facts. But these disabilities of the weavers can be illustrated by other evidence. As to the necessity of obtaining permission of the governing body of the town to exercise the craft, we find that as late as 1316 it was arranged at High Wycombe that "all weavers shall give *only* twelve-pence yearly to the Gildani—the two officers of the Gild merchant—for every loom, and shall henceforth be free in all things concerning the gild of merchants, *except Stallage*."² But stallage was the right, or the payment for the right,³ of having a stall in the market-place, so that it is clear that the merchant guild still tried to monopolize or control the *sale* of the cloth. This monopoly is further illustrated by an order of the guild merchant of Leicester in 1265 that "weavers should not be permitted to weave cloth for the men of other towns while they had sufficient

¹ *De Legibus Angliæ*, l. 5, c. 5 : quoted in Stubbs, *Select Charters*, 162.

² *Rep. Hist. MSS. Comm.* 1876, 556. See also Proofs and illustrations, p. 277, in the forthcoming work of Dr. Gross, *The Gild Merchant*.

³ Ducange, "Stallaguim : Præstatio pro stallis."

work to do for the men of Leicester"—at the same time fixing the rate per ell at which they were to be paid.¹

Documents considerably earlier exhibit a particular monopoly, of which I know no later mention—a monopoly namely in the sale of cloths dyed in any other way than simply with woad. This was carried so far that the merchants even prohibited the dyers from dyeing with anything else but woad. A case came before the Curia Regis in the eleventh year of John, in which the fullers and dyers of Lincoln complain that the Alderman and Reeves of Lincoln have seized cloth belonging to them on the ground that they had dyed and sold cloth.² They claim liberty to dye with what sort of dye they please, as free citizens of Lincoln having the same rights as citizens of London. The Alderman and Reeves acknowledge that they have taken the cloth, but this was because it had been dyed in disregard of the custom of the city, and of an express prohibition. The dyers have only the right of dyeing in woad, and the only cloth they may sell is such as is woad-dyed or else white. The fullers likewise, have no right to sell dyed cloth, "because they have no community (of rights) with the free citizens."³ In the same reign, the Exchequer rolls record the payment of fines by "the men"—

¹Thompson, *Hist. of Leicester*. 84.

²*Placitorum Abbreviatio* (ed. 1811) 65.

³"Aldermannus et prepositi venerunt et cognoscunt quod ceperunt pannos illorum, sicut illos qui tincti sunt contra legem et consuetudinem civitatis suæ, et prohibitionem eis factam. Quia, ut dicunt, non licet tinctoribus pannos suos proprios tingere nisi tantum in waido, vel illos vendere nisi waido tintetos vel albos.... Fullonibus similiter non licet, quia non habent legem vel communiam cum liberis civibus."

the governing body—of Worcester, Bedford, Beverley and other towns in Yorkshire, Norwich, Huntingdon, and Northampton, the “burgesses” of Gloucester, the men of Nottingham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Lincoln, Stamford, Grimsby, Barton, Lafford, St. Albans, Berkhamstead and Chesterfield, in order that they might freely buy and sell dyed cloth.¹ This cloth was doubtless chiefly of Flemish manufacture, but it is clear that the ruling body intended to use their privileges against the craftsmen if they thought it desirable. It will be noticed that Lincoln is among the towns mentioned.

The lengths to which the antagonism between the burghers and the artisan guilds might go, was signally shewn in London. We do not know whether London ever possessed a guild merchant: at any rate in 1191, by the recognition of its commune, it obtained complete municipal self-government.² This involved the control of industry by the body of citizens, and jurisdiction over those engaged in it. In the exercise of these powers the new authorities came into collision with the privileges of the weavers' guild. Accordingly they offered to make an annual payment to the Exchequer, if the guild were abolished.³ The offer was accepted, and a charter was

¹Madox. *Exchequer*, 324. Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, i. 347, says: “There were also *dealers* in Bedford, etc.” But the entry runs “homines de Bedford,” which is not “men in Bedford,” but “the men of Bedford,” the burgesses, the ruling body, whatever it may have been. And in one case it is expressly “*burgenses Gloucestrie*.”

²Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i. 704.

³*Mag. Rot.* 4 John. Madox, *Exchequer* 279. “Cives Londonie debent lx. marcas pro Gilda Telaria delenda, ita ut de cetero non suscitetur; et pro carta Regis inde habenda.” I have not been able to find the charter, which, according to Herbert, *Livery Companies*,

issued in 1199 or 1200 abolishing the guild, and imposing on the citizens an annual payment of twenty marks in the place of the eighteen which the weavers had been accustomed to give. Three years later the citizens appear as owing sixty marks, possibly arrears; and either because of failure on the part of the civic authorities to pay the stipulated amount, or because John saw how unwise he had been, the weavers' guild was restored on the promise of the craftsmen to pay the twenty marks. Yet four years later the guild did not feel itself quite out of danger; and in 1223 the weavers deposited their charter in the exchequer lest the citizens should seize it.¹

The reign of Edward I. was, we have been told, a period not so much of creation as of definition and adaptation.² This is as true in industry as in any of the other departments of national life. During the preceding century guilds of weavers and of other craftsmen had been fighting their way into recognition and importance. But the craft guilds were not merely "friendly societies;" they claimed to control all the processes of manufacture, and to exercise jurisdiction in all matters directly connected with the craft. Such a claim the ruling bodies in the various towns strenuously resisted; these were powers they were determined to keep in their own

i. 24, is cited at large in the *Inspeximus* of Charles II. But it appears in the list of charters in the *Liber Albus* (*Munimenta Gildhallae* vol. I.) 134: "Alia charta ejusdem Joannis, quod Guilda Telaria non sit de cetero in civitate Londonierum, nec ullatenus suscitetur," and the copy of H. ii.'s charter to the weavers in the *Liber Custumarum*, 39, has the joyful heading "quæ adnihilata est per chartam Regis Joannis."

¹ *Liber Custumarum*, Riley *Introd.* lxiii.

² Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* ii. 116.

hands. The central government, however, taught by what was going on abroad, must have seen that overpowerful municipal bodies were far more dangerous to the royal authority than craft guilds; thus in London the attempts of the mayor to elude the jurisdiction of the itinerant justices, caused the king to suspend the municipal constitution for ten years.¹ In the artisans, perhaps, might be found some counterpoise to the civic oligarchies. Hence the royal influence was probably on the side of the craftsmen, and this may explain the rapidity with which the guild system became the dominant fact in the industry of the time.² The result, indeed, was a sort of compromise; the municipal authorities never gave up the claim to control industry, and frequently imposed regulations upon particular trades; but the every-day regulation of processes, and the petty jurisdiction which it involved were surrendered to the guild officers. That this was so we see from what happened in London in 1300.³ A body of men, called burellers, had grown up, of whom not much is known, but part of whose occupation was certainly that of preparing yarn for the weavers. They were, therefore, to some extent, dependent upon the weavers, and as they had a guild of their own, there were frequent collisions between the two bodies. In 1300, the bailiffs of the weavers were summoned before the mayor to answer the burellers' complaints. The proceedings resulted in the appointment of a

¹Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* iii. 616.

²Ib. iii, 618. "Edward I. seems to have encouraged the development of the guild jurisprudence, and may have been induced to do so by his hostility to the magnates of the commune."

³*Liber Custumaram* 121-6.

sort of committee of seventeen persons, namely: four aldermen, six burellers and seven weavers, to revise certain of the regulations as to the weavers' guild. A number of ordinances were therefore drawn up, and apparently came into force—ordinances which recognized a very considerable power of self-government on the part of the craft. The general meeting, known as "the guild," was to be held annually; but besides that, weekly courts were to be held, wherein were to be tried all members of the craft on pleas touching their industry; and such pleas were in future to be withdrawn from the sheriff's court.¹ The mayor was given the right to preside over this weekly court if he chose, but it would obviously be difficult for him to be present at the courts of all the various guilds even if he did choose; in his absence, therefore, his place was to be taken by good men and sworn of the guild.² At the same time, the opportunity is taken to confirm the customs as to apprenticeship which had been growing up; one of the clauses lays down that no one is to work as weaver, who has not served as apprentice, and apprenticeship is to last seven years.³

In London at this date—and the same was probably true in other large towns—the woollen industry was divided into four or five branches, the weavers and burellers, each organized in a guild, the dyers and fullers united in the same guild, and the tailors

¹ 123, Art. vi.

² Art. iii. "Et si le meire ne ysoit, il deit assigner quatre prodes-hommes du mester jurez . . a tenir la Court; les queux quatre soient chescun an remuables a la volunte du mester, et deyvent estre chescun an presentez au Meyre."

³ 123. Art. xiv.

or *cissores*. But they were very conscious that they had interests in common, and they were accustomed to act together in matters affecting the whole industry. This is illustrated by two documents of 1298.¹ The first is a royal writ to the warden and sheriffs of London. It sets forth that the king has been informed by the complaint of two London citizens belonging to the guild of fullers and dyers, that whereas the old custom had been that cloth entrusted to men of that guild to be fulled, was fulled by the men of the craft or their servants by treading it with their feet in their own houses in the city, certain persons have received cloth and sent it out of the city to be fulled, for instance, to a fulling mill at Stratford; and the king orders that right should be done in the matter. The offenders were accordingly summoned, and confessed their fault. This being done, the warden and sheriffs thought it advisable to bring together a committee representing the various crafts interested, and to entrust them with the drawing up of fresh regulations. The body appointed was composed of two weavers, two burellers, two dyers and two tailors, which shows that a new body of craftsmen had come into existence, the tailors, who cut up the cloth for garments (whence their name), and doubtless bought it for this purpose from the weavers or dyers;² and shows also that the fullers and dyers

¹ Ib. 127-9.

² Mr. Loftie's theory that the weavers' guild split into sections, "of which the tailors retained the ancient name *telarie*," (*Hist. of London*, i. 169, n.; and *London in Historic Towns'* series, 49), is opposed both to etymology and historical evidence. "*Tailor*" is from F. *tailler*, to cut; and its common Latin form is *cissor*; thus in

were at this time still united, as they probably had been from the first. The second document seems to contain the regulations which this committee drew up. The first is to the effect that, "whereas cloth which private persons and strangers have given to fullers and to dyers and to weavers in London to full, has been sent outside the city by these fullers and dyers and weavers to be fullled at mills," these craftsmen are no longer to do so, and the use of mills in this way is only to be permitted to the owners of cloth, or to those who intend to keep it for their use. The guild officials are to prevent cloth going out at the city gates; offenders are to be heavily punished, and for the third offence to foreswear the craft. Some miscellaneous regulations are added, of which the most important is that "no one of the craft (of fullers and dyers) shall receive the workman or apprentice of another without the consent of his master."¹ The sharp distinction between master, journeyman and apprentice is often described as an essential characteristic of the guild

Liber Albus, 727, the heading is *Articuli Cissorum*, while the text is "Oe *Taillours* preignent," etc.; while *telarius*, a weaver, is from *tela*, in the sense of a web, (or in late Latin, a piece of cloth), or in the sense of a loom. Speaking of the end of the reign of Edward III., Mr. Loftie says that "the weavers are not named at all." Webbers, however, do appear as 9th on the list of Mysteries, 50 Ed. III., (in Herbert, *Livery Companies*, i. 34), while Tailors are next but one above them. But it will be seen later that the weavers have a continuous history, which will be found down to 24 Hy. VII., in *Madox Forma Burgi*, 191-6. The same phrases are used throughout, thus, "*Telarie Londonie reddunt compotum de xx marcis pro Gilda sua*," 5 John; "*Telarii Londonie debent xx marcas per annum pro Gilda sua*," 24 Henry VII.

¹*Lib. Cust.* 129. "Derichef qe nul du mester receyue autri louwer ou apprentiz en son mester, saunz la volunte de son mestre."

system; but certainly it was late in growing up, and the London fullers in this respect outstripped their fellows elsewhere.¹ Thus in the earliest regulations which have been preserved of the guild of the fullers of Lincoln, regulations dating from 1337, the rules are singularly liberal as to the admission of new members.² Fullers from other towns may have their names put on the roll on paying a penny to the wax (for candles on procession days); while, apparently, there is no such thing as apprenticeship, for it is only said that if anyone wishes to learn the craft, no one shall teach it to him until he has given two pence to the wax.³ Yet even in London it seems clear, from the first article of the regulations just quoted, that the boundaries between the functions of the three crafts of fullers, dyers and weavers were not yet rigidly determined.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there must have been a very rapid increase in the amount of cloth manufactured in England. This is shewn,

¹ Cf. the late development of such distinctions in Germany, Schmoller *Strassb. Tuch. u. Webereft.* 389.

² *English Guilds* Ed. Toulmin Smith, [E. E. T. S. 1870.] 179.

³ One clause has perplexed the editor: "quod nullus ejusdem officii ad perticam cum muliere labore, nisi cum uxore magistre vel ancilla sua commensali"—"no one of the craft shall work at fulling (*pertica* was the pole with which the cloth was beaten in the trough), with a woman, unless it be with the wife of the master, or her maid who sits at her table." He asks "why is he not to work in company with an ordinary woman?" Surely the intention was to prevent the general employment of female labor. The wife of his master or her maid may lend a helping hand in emergencies, but women are not to be regularly employed. The small extent to which women were employed in manufactures under the guild system is one of the characteristics distinguishing it from the domestic industry which followed.

among the evidence, by the increased importation of woad, which was necessary for the purpose of dyeing blue or blue-black. During the sixth and seventh years of John, the king's chamberlains of London are recorded to have received less than £100 "for license to bring woad into England and sell it," while in six months in the twelfth year the wardens of the ports accounted for almost £600, and this probably did not include all the ports, for some may have been specially dealt with. However we may interpret these figures, it is clear that the importation of woad was already very considerable.¹

No mediæval government contented itself with leaving to local authorities and crafts the entire control of industry. It always attempted to impose certain general conditions upon the whole of a country; and this would be especially the case in a country like England, in which from the Norman conquest the central authority had been peculiarly strong, and in which the political wisdom of Henry II. had created an effective administrative system. In 1197 was issued the Assize of Measures, enacting that there should be a uniformity of weights and measures over the whole country. But, while for no other commodity is the exact size fixed, the

¹ Madox, *Exchequer* 531, 532, col. 1; 530, 531, col. 1. Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce* i. 359, 382, has made use of Madox's figures, and I have followed them in supposing "de Assisa Waisdie" and "de Consuetudine Waisdie" to mean the same thing. But he is mistaken in supposing the figures given for 12 John to apply to the whole of one year. The text is headed, "Computus Custodum Portuum Maris a feste S. Michaelis anne xii. usque ad mediam Quadragesimam anni sequentis hunc annum"—the half year from Michaelmas 1310 to Midlent 1311, falling within John's 12th year. Dover is either exempted or specially dealt with, the assize of woad of Kent and Sussex being "præter doure."

special importance of cloth is shewn by the following enactment: "It is ordained that woollen cloths, wherever they are made, shall be made of the same width, to wit: of two ells within the lists, and of the same goodness in the middle and sides." In each county, city or borough, four or six legal men are to be appointed, who, with the help of the authorities of each locality, are to carry out this assize.¹ This was to come into effect "after the fair of Mid-Lent at Stamford," so that that fair was already of national importance. The supervision of the execution of this ordinance does not seem to have been at once entrusted to a special officer, like the aulnager, as has been supposed.² For we are told some years later, in 1201, how that the king's *justices* came to the fair of St. Botolph's, intending to seize all the cloth that did not satisfy the assize—whereupon the merchants remonstrated so warmly, and made so tempting an offer of money to the king that the assize was not enforced. Yet the ordinance was certainly not withdrawn or entirely disregarded, and as it was reënacted in Magna Carta it must by that time have come to be generally approved. In the roll of the fourth year of John is recorded a fine paid by men of Esseburn for *stretched* cloth, and in that of 13 Henry III., are mentioned the fines imposed on two merchants because their cloth was not of due width.³ And, as we have already seen, it was at any rate thought advisable by the burghers of Gloster and the men of Nottingham to purchase

¹ Roger of Hoveden, (Roll's series) iv. 33.

² Macpherson, i. 462 n.

³ Maddox, *Ezchequer* 393, 394, col. 2.

special permission to sell cloth of any width or "stretchedness."¹

As soon as on the accession of Edward I. a strong government had again been established, the assize was vigorously enforced, and it must soon have been found expedient to appoint an officer for that special purpose. Towards the end of the reign of Edward I. Perot le Tailleur who had "the aulnage of cloth in the fairs of our realm" was removed for some default in his accounts, and in 1298 the king committed to Peter of Edelmeton the custody of aulnage and of the assize of cloth, both English and foreign, sold throughout England.² This is the earliest documentary evidence of an office which existed, until the reign of William III., with an importance for a time increasing and afterwards steadily diminishing. The long history of the changes in the regulations as to width and length, complicated as it is by the appearance of new materials and qualities, cannot be followed here. Yet a very significant change of policy in 1353 cannot be passed over. In a statute of that year it was enacted that, whereas foreign merchants are deterred from coming to England because they forfeit their cloth "if it be not of assize," henceforth cloth shall not be forfeited even if it be not of the due size. "The king's aulnager shall measure the cloth and mark the same, by which mark a man may know how much the cloth containeth; and of as much as the cloth shall be found less than the assize, allowance or abatement shall be made to the buyer." The aulnager's fee from the seller is fixed at a half-penny for a whole cloth, and

¹ 2. "Strictitudo," 16. 324.

² *Ib.* 538.

a farthing for a half cloth, and nothing for a cloth which is less. He is to meddle only with cloth that is to be sold, and any cloth put up to sale without being sealed shall be forfeited.¹ With the growth and complexity of the manufacture, the government gave up the attempt to regulate the size of cloths to be sold; but it would not give up the attempt to enforce honest dealing, and to enable the customer to easily ascertain for what he was paying. There is a clear distinction in principle between enacting that no goods shall be sold save of a certain size or quality, and giving a public guarantee of the size or quality of certain goods, leaving dealers to sell and customers to buy as they please. This latter is probably a task that government could in many cases undertake safely advantageously, and it will be remembered that as late as 1776 Adam Smith speaks with approbation of the stamp on cloth.²

It does not follow within the scope of this essay to treat of the extent and character of the export of wool from England. The manufacture of cloth had grown up and become exceedingly prosperous in Flanders and the north of France more than a century before an independent body of weavers arose in England. Arras and the towns in its neighborhood retained some traditions of the old skill of the Roman artisans, and northern France and Flanders

¹ 27 E. iii. st. 1 C. H. *Statutes of the Realm* I. 330.

² Arguing that long apprenticeships give us security against insufficient workmanship, he says: "Quite different regulations are necessary to prevent this abuse. The sterling mark upon plate, and the stamp upon linen and woollen cloth, give the purchaser much greater security than any Statutes of Apprenticeship. He generally looks at these," but doesn't ask about apprenticeship. *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. i. ch. 10, p. 2.

early became famous for cloth of fine quality and rich color.¹ In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the green and dark blue Flemish cloth took the place of linen as the dress of the upper classes in Germany.² Now it was from England alone that the raw material could be obtained in large quantities; and how great the trade must have been early in the twelfth century is shewn by a charming story which a contemporary tells us. In 1114 certain of the Canons of Laon set out for England, "which at that time flourished with great opulence of riches, owing to the peace and justice which its King Henry maintained within it," to raise subscriptions for the rebuilding of their church. They took ship at Wissant; "on the same ship came with us several merchants who wanted to go from Flanders to England to buy wool, and thought it would be safer to go with us, bringing with them more than three hundred marks of silver in bags and purses." In their passage they were attacked by pirates, "whereupon the aforesaid merchants in despair of their lives, offered their bags and purses with all their money to Our Lady, and cast them on her shrine, beseeching her pity with tears, promising that if only she saved their bodies from the hands of the pirates, she should keep all their money for the restoration of her church." Then a wind arose and scattered the enemy. When they got to shore, the monks were about, in charity, to give back some of the money to the merchants, "but they, as soon as they saw that they had escaped death, forgot their fear, and without our permission each one took his bag and purse, leaving nothing to Our Lady but idle

¹Schmoller, *T. u. W. Z.* 366-7.

²Ib. 363.

words of thanks. But now let all who give their property to God and take it back again, listen to the revenge, which the just Judge her Son took for His Mother. They had journeyed over almost the whole of England, and had spent all their money in buying great quantities of wool, which they had stored in a great building on the coast at Dover; but behold on the night before the day on which they intended to cross, the building suddenly took fire and was burnt down with the whole of their wool. Then, when they had lost all their property and had become destitute, they too late repented of the insult they had offered to the Queen of Heaven."¹

The trade between England and the low countries was in the hands of the bodies of merchants who governed the various towns, and these, in order to ensure their own monopoly and secure mutual protection, formed, certainly considerably before 1240,² the "Hanse of London." This association, which has been mistakenly confused with the Teutonic Hanse, was probably earlier in its origin, and lasted into the fifteenth century. It included seventeen towns, among them all those in Flanders of any importance, and for a time Chalons, Rheims, St. Quentin, Cambray, Amiens and Beauvais. Even Paris is said to have been a member.³ Apparently its members had to fear lest overbold craftsmen should attempt to get rid of middlemen, and themselves buy

¹ Hermann, *de Mirac. S. Marie Laudun*, lii, cc. 4, 5, in Migne, *Patrologia*, tom 156.

² When occurs the first mention of it in a charter of Bruges, Warnkenig, *Histoire de Flandre* trans. Gheldolf, ii, 207.

³ Fagniez, *L'industrie à Paris* 19-20, quoting a work of Bourquelot on the Fairs of Champagne, which I have not seen.

their materials or sell their fine cloth in England. If any such should be found, say their statutes, he is to forfeit all his wares, and the same penalty is to fall on a member of the hanse who does business on commission for a craftsman. Artisans—among whom are specially mentioned fullers, weavers, shearers, and “dyers who dye with their own hands and have blue nails”—can indeed enter the hanse, but on conditions which could very rarely be satisfied; for they must renounce their craft, and after a year and a day they must get the consent of their own town by paying to its magistrates such a sum as the latter may appoint.¹

Cologne was later than the Flemish towns in obtaining manufacturing and commercial importance, but it was far in advance, especially in weaving, of the rest of Germany.² How early its merchants began to visit England for wool we cannot tell; but it appears from a letter of protection to the men of Cologne issued by Henry II., that they had a house in London as early as 1157.³ Richard granted them permission to visit and trade over the whole of England, especially at the fairs, and freed them from the payment of two shillings which they were wont to give “for their Guildhall in London”—an exemp-

¹ Warnkœnig-Gheldolf, *Flandre* ii. 206-211, 506-512. Cf. Ashley, *James and Philip v. Artevelde*, 15-20.

² Schmoller, *T. u. W. Z.*, 366.

³ Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte des Hansischen Stalhofes zu London*, Urk. 2. It has often been supposed that this “house,” or a building on the same site, became the later steelyard. But in the latter part of the 13th c. the Guildhall of the Cologne merchants and that of the Teutonic merchants were still distinct establishments. Riley, Pref. to *Liber Albus*, xvi.

tion which was again granted by Henry III. in 1235.¹ Out of this guild of merchants of Cologne arose the great Teutonic Hanse: first by the inclusion in the guild of all other German merchants who wished to trade in England, and afterwards by the rise of Lübeck. For Lübeck, after vainly trying to enter the Cologne confederation, formed a hanse of its own, to which that of Cologne soon became subordinate.²

Compared with Flanders and the great Rhenish cities, England was at this time a poor and backward country. She manufactured no cloth for export; a great part of her own demand for cloth—the whole of that for the finer qualities—was satisfied by the low countries. And even the export itself of English wool, which was so essential to the prosperity of the manufacturing centres abroad, was wholly in the hands of foreigners—the Hanse of London and the Teutonic Hanse.

We shall see later how the merchants of the Staple arose to question this monopoly in the export of wool. But what seems first to have occurred to the English government was the idea, that by prohibiting the export of wool altogether, they might gain for their own country the manufacture. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the export of wool was frequently for a time forbidden. Usually, indeed, this measure had for its immediate object to force the rulers of Flanders to satisfy the political demands of the English government—notably in 1336—to compel Flanders to abandon the French alliance.³ But

¹ Lappenberg, Urk. 5, 26. Cf. Madox, *Exchequer* 285.

² See the brief history of the Teutonic Hanse, in the article by Mr. Dodge in *Ency. Brit.*

³ Ashley, *James and Php. v. Astevelde*, 78-80, 96-7.

there can be no doubt that the other consideration was also frequently present. And this is clearly the case with the earliest instance of prohibition—that by the Oxford parliament of 1258, when the barons “decreed that the wool of the country should be worked up in England, and should not be sold to foreigners, and that everyone should use woollen cloth made within the country,” and lest people should be dissatisfied at having to put up with the rough cloth of England, bidding them “not to seek over-precious raiment.”¹ Perhaps we may trace a similar idea in what is told us by a chronicler opposed to Simon de Montfort, how, that when the piracy of the sailors of the Cinque Ports had put an end to trade, and people began to complain, the Earl tried to persuade them that they could get on very well without traffic with foreigners, “whereupon very many seeking to please the Earl wore white cloth, disdaining to wear colored.”²

In 1271 disputes between Henry III. and the ruler of Flanders led to a renewed prohibition of the export of wool, coupled with a prohibition of the importation of cloth;³ and although the order as to cloth seems to have been withdrawn, that as to wool was renewed by Edward I. in 1274. But a few months later, peace was made with the count and the prohibition withdrawn.⁴ The attempt, if such it was, to prevent foreigners from using English wool, and to cause it to be all worked up in England, was prema-

¹ Walter of Hemingburgh, i. 306. Ed. Engl. Hist. Soc.

² Thomas Wykes, s. a. 1264 in *Annales Monastici* (Rolls. series), iv. 158.

³ *Calendar. Rot. Patentium*. (Ed. 1802); 55 H. iii. i. M. 6, 10.

⁴ Rymer, *Federa*, 510, 513.

ture. The wool could be kept in England, but the small body of English craftsmen could not meet a demand so great and sudden. The industrial organization of the time already supplied them with work sufficient to occupy their time, and there was no "reserve army" of half employed workmen. Moreover for the making of the fine sorts of cloth, or cloth of richer and more varied dyes, Englishmen did not yet possess the necessary skill. Edward III. saw, later, that if we were to do without Flemish cloth we must bring over Flemish workmen.

II.

THE FIRST IMMIGRATION.

With Edward III. begins the policy of encouraging the settlement within the kingdom of foreign cloth-makers, from whom English weavers and dyers could learn the arts in which they had previously been wanting. That this was the object which the government set before itself is shewn in the earliest piece of evidence we have that foreign weavers had come into the kingdom. This is a letter of protection issued in 1331 to John Kempe, of Flanders, weaver of woollen cloth. After reciting that Kempe had come with certain servants and apprentices to England for the sake of exercising his craft, and instructing and informing those who wished to learn it,¹ it announced that the king had taken Kempe and his workmen into his protection, and promised similar letters to all other men of that craft as well as to

¹ "*Causa mesteri sui inhibi exercendi Et illos qui inde addiscere voluerint instruendi et informandi*," Rymer, *Fœdera*, ii. 823.

dyers and fullers who were willing to come to England. A letter of the same kind as granted in 1336 to two weavers of Brabant who had settled at York, the king declaring that he "expected through their industry, if they carried on their occupation in England, that much advantage would result to himself and his subjects;"¹ and another in the next year to 15 makers of cloth, who with their laborers and servants were about to come to England.² But the government did not content itself with protecting occasional immigrants. A complete declaration of policy is presented by a statute of 1337.³ It offers protection to all foreign cloth workers who shall come to England, promising moreover to grant them such franchises as may suffice them; it frees the new comers from all restrictions as to aulnage—"a man may make the cloths as long and as short as a man will;" it totally prohibits the importation of foreign cloth, and even the wearing of foreign cloth by any man or woman, great or small, the royal family only excepted; and it prohibits the exportation of wool until it shall be otherwise provided. The contemporary chronicler is of course right in the immediate object which he assigns to the prohibition of export, "that the king might the more quickly overcome the pride of the Flemings, who respected woolsacks much more than Englishmen."⁴ And indeed Edward found the order a tolerably effective means of coercion: the misery which it caused in Flanders and above all in Ghent had the effect of alienating the

¹ Ib. ii. 954.

² Ib. ii. 969.

³ *Statutes of the Realm* (ed. 1810), 280.

⁴ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, i. 221 (Rolls. S.)

people more than ever from their count and of bringing James van Artevelde to the government.¹ The English king was not able to obtain at once the open support of the Flemings, but even to gain their neutrality he readily permitted wool to be exported and cloth to be imported, and to win their favor was even willing to promise that goods marked with the seal of Ghent should be exempt from examination in the English markets.² Yet though the immediate political purpose had been predominant, it is clear from the very juxtaposition of clauses in the statute that it was also thought of as assisting the new woollen manufactures in England.³

The account given of the foreign settlers by Fuller, the church historian, writing in the seventeenth century, is among the quaintest passages in his delightful book.⁴ Where he gets all his information from he does not say; probably most of the details are suggested by his imagination. But it is worth while to see how the impulse given to the woollen manufacture in the reign of the third Edward was regarded by a wise and witty writer at a time when traditions as to the new-comers were still living:

"The King and State began now to grow sensible of the great gain the Netherlands got by our *English* wool, in memory whereof the *Duke of Burgundy* not long after instituted the order of the *Golden Fleece*, wherein indeed the *Fleece* was ours, the *Golden* theirs, so vast their emolument by the trade of clothing. Our king therefore resolved, if possible, to reduce the trade to his own country,

¹ Ashley, *James and Philip van Artevelde*, 84, 91.

² *Ib.* 106-7.

³ Cf. Smith, *Memoirs of Wool* (1747) i. 25 n.

⁴ *The Church History of Britain*, endeavored by Thomas Fuller. Ed. 1655, 110-42. His own Italics are retained.

who as yet were ignorant of that art, as knowing no more what to do with their wool than the sheep that wear it, as to any artificial and curious *drapery*, their best *cloths* then being no better than *friezes*, such their coarseness for want of skill in their making. But soon after followed a great alteration, and we shall enlarge ourselves in the manner thereof.

"The intercourse now being great betwixt the *English* and the *Netherlands* (increased of late since King Edward married the daughter of the Earl of *Hainault*), unsuspected *Emissaries* were employed by our king into those countries, who wrought themselves into familiarity with such *Dutch men* as were absolute *masters of their trade*, but not *masters of themselves*, as either *journeymen* or *apprentices*. These bemoaned the slavishness of these poor servants, whom their masters used rather like *Heathens* than *Christians*, yea rather like *horses* than *men*. Early up and late in bed, and all day hard work and harder fare (a few *herrings* and mouldy *cheese*), and all to enrich the *churls* their *masters* without any profit unto themselves.

But oh, how happy should they be if they would but come over into *England*, bringing their *mystery* with them, which would provide their welcome in all places. Here they should feed on *fat beef* and *mutton*, till nothing but their fulness should stint their stomachs, yea they should feed on the labor of their own hands, enjoying a proportionable profit of their pains to themselves.

"Liberty is a lesson quickly *conned by heart*, men having a principle within themselves to *prompt* them in case they forget it. Persuaded with the promises, many *Dutch servants* leave their masters and make over to *England*. Their departure thence (being picked here and there) made no sensible vacuity, but their meeting here altogether amounted to a considerable fulness. With themselves they brought over their *trade* and their *tools*, namely such as could not as yet be so conveniently made in *England*.

"Happy the *yeoman's* house into which one of these *Dutch men* did enter, bringing industry and wealth along with them. Such who came in strangers within their doors, soon after went out *bridegrooms*, and returned *sons-in-law*, having married the daughters of their landlords who first entertained them. Yea, these yeomen in whose houses they harboured, soon proceeded gentlemen, gaining great estates to themselves, *arms* and *worship* to their estates.

"The king having gotten this treasury of foreigners, thought not fit to continue them all in one place, lest on discontent they might embrace a general resolution to return, but bestowed them throughout all the parts of the land, that clothing thereby might be the better dispersed. * * * This new generation of *Dutch* was

now sprinkled everywhere, so that *England* (in relation I mean to her own counties) may bespeak these *inmates* in the language of the poet :

“‘*Quæ regio in terris vestri non plena laboris?*’—

though generally (when left to their own choice) they preferred a *maritime habitation*.”

He then gives the following view of the distribution of the industry, doubtless as it was in his own time :

East.	Norfolk—Norwich Fustians.	
	Suffolk—Sudbury Bayes.	
	Essex—Colchester Bayes and Serges.	
	Kent—Kentish Broad-cloths.	
West.	Devonshire Kirses.	
	Gloucestershire,	} Cloth.
	Worcestershire,	
	Wales—Welsh Friezes.	
North.	Westmoreland—Kendal Cloth.	
	Lancashire—Manchester Cotton.	
	Yorkshire—Halifax Cloths.	
South.	Somersetshire—Taunton Serges.	
	Hampshire,	} Cloth.”
	Berkshire,	
	Sussex,	

After referring to the “heightening of the manufacturer to a higher perfection” by the Dutch who came over under Elizabeth, he concludes :

“But enough of this subject, which let none condemn for a deviation from Church-history ; first, because it would not grieve one to go a little out of the way, if the way be good, as this degression is for the credit and profit of our country ; secondly, it reductively belongeth to the Church-history, seeing many poor people both young and old, formerly charging the parishes (as appeared by the accounts of the Church officers) were hereby enabled to maintain themselves.”

An account first printed by Misselden in 1623, without any other explanation of its origin than that it was an exchequer record in an ancient manuscript of a merchant, professes to give the amount of ex-

ports and imports in 1354.¹ According to this, more than thirty thousand sacks of wool were exported in that year, but also 4774½ pieces of cloth valued at 40 shillings each, and 8061½ pieces of worsted stuff valued at 16 shillings and 8 pence each, while among the imports were 1831 pieces of fine cloth, each valued at 6 pounds. The account may be wholly fictitious, or may be assigned to the wrong year; but if it could be accepted as genuine, it would show that twenty years after the introduction of foreign craftsmen began, England exported large quantities of cloth, though some of it was probably in an unfinished state and was worked up abroad. The difference between the value, per piece, of cloth imported, and of that exported, is very striking.

We have seen that by 1300, the London weavers' guild had gained complete recognition of certain powers of supervision and jurisdiction over its members. But, once victorious, the process of deterioration had set in with them as with all similar organizations of the middle ages; liberties were turned into exclusive privileges and were made the means of establishing a monopoly.

In 1321 the weavers were indicted before the justices by the wards of Candlewick street (now Cannon street) and Walbrook, neighborhoods where the weavers chiefly congregated, and were summarily fined for two offences:—"because by confederacy and conspiracy, in the Church of S. Margaret Pattens, they ordained among themselves that for weaving each cloth they should take sixpence more than anciently they had been wont," and, "because they

¹ Misselden, *The Circle of Commerce*, 119, copied in Macpherson i., 553; Smith, *Memoirs of Wool*, 43.

seized the tools of men of their guild condemned for theft, against the royal prerogative." At the same time the weavers were summoned to answer by what warrant they had a guild and annually elected bailiffs and other officers. They produced their charters, which they urged were a sufficient authorization; to which the king's sergeant replied that many of the regulations they had recently made were to the injury of the public. Thereupon a jury was empaneled, which drew up a long declaration. It was true, they said, that the weavers had a guild resting on certain charters, and by virtue of these charters, they had the right to elect bailiffs annually, who were to be presented before the mayor and sworn to do their duty, and also the right to hold their court weekly, for pleas of debt, contract, agreement and petty offences; and for such matters weavers could claim to be tried by their own court. If any were behind-hand with his contribution to the ferm of twenty marks paid by the guild to the king, the bailiffs could seize his loom; and when quarrels arose between burellers and weavers about yarn furnished by the former, they were wont to be decided by a mixed jury.

All these rights the jurors seem to have thought justifiable. But there were other regulations, made some thirty years before this time, which they declared were to the injury of our Lord the King and his people—such as the prohibition to work between Christmas and Candlemas, or by candle light; the rule that cloth of Candlewick street should not be made in less than four days, though it was possible to make it in two or three—regulations which prevented as much cloth being made as might be, and

hindered it from becoming as cheap as it would otherwise have been. But the weavers did even worse than this, "they admit no one into their guild without his making a heavy payment, maliciously planning that the fewer the workmen the dearer their labor may become. Whereas, up to thirty years ago there were about three hundred and eighty looms in the craft within the city, now there are only eighty, because the weavers have lessened the number for their own advantage."¹

At this point the case was adjourned, and we are left in ignorance as to the result. However, enough is given to enable us to form a picture of the comfortable group of weavers in Cannon street, carefully restricting their numbers and trying to increase their profits. Much the same state of things doubtless existed in other large weaving centres; and these were the conditions which the artisans from the low countries came to disturb.

The settlement of foreign workmen in any large number seems to have commenced after the act of 1337.² They met with so hostile a reception from the London craftsmen, who did not refrain from violent assaults and threats of death, that seven years later the government found it necessary to send a special writ to the mayor and sheriffs. They were enjoined to cause it to be proclaimed that the king had taken the foreigners in London under his special protection, and they were to imprison in Newgate all whom they found disregarding the

¹ *Liber Custumarum* 416-425, and Riley's *Preface* lxi. The pleadings are also given, with some imperfect lines, in *Placita de Quo Warranto* (ed. 1818) 465.

² To judge from the recital in the writ of 1344. *Fodera* iii. 23.

proclamation. But if the foreigners were to stay in London, the weavers' guild would be sure to try to make them become members and pay their due contribution to the ferm. In 1351 "the poor weavers of London" represented to the king in Parliament that Henry II. had given them a charter conferring upon them a monopoly of their industry, in return for which they were bound to pay twenty marks yearly, but that now, taking advantage of the proclamation of 1337, foreigners had come into the city and were making gain, and were free from the burden of contributing to the ferm. They pray, therefore, either that they may have jurisdiction over the foreigners, or that they themselves may be freed from the ferm.¹ The matter was referred to the exchequer, where Nicolas of Worsted appeared on behalf of the London weavers and complained that Giles Spolmakere, with four other persons in London, and one in Southark, "foreigners who are not of the gild," have meddled with their industry and made all sorts of rayed and colored cloth, and yet will not be subject to the jurisdiction of the guild.² Proceedings, however, were stayed by a royal writ which Giles had just obtained and now produced. It set forth that the king had promised to protect the foreigners so long as they paid what they ought, and many of them had willingly paid their share of the twenty marks as assessed by the

¹ Les Tylers (telarii) priont que lour Chartre lour soit allowe, isse que les estraunges soient par eux justifiez en lour Gilde, ou autrement, gils puissent estre descharges de la dite ferme de vintz marez." Madox, *Firma Burgi*, 284, n. col. 2.

² "Faciunt omnimodos pannos radiatos, et coloratos, et alios pannos, . . . et se justiciare nolunt per Telarios predictos." Ib. 285, col. 2.

guild itself; and yet the weavers of the guild kept on trying to force them to belong to their guild, and to come to its courts.¹ The king therefore ordered that Giles and the other foreign weavers should not be molested because they do not belong to the guild of weavers of London,² and that the trial should go no further.

Next year the government went farther, and in reply to a petition addressed to the sovereign in Parliament by the foreign weavers, "the king . . . did, with the assent of the prelates, earls, barons and other great men assembled in this said parliament, grant for himself and his heirs to all and singular foreign clothworkers . . . who then resided in his kingdom . . . and would then after come and abide there and follow their craft . . . that they might safely abide in the realm under the king's protection, and might freely follow their craft; without being compellable to be members of the gild of weavers of London, natives, or of other cloth workers of this realm, or to pay any sums of money by reason of such gild, as appeareth by the parliament rolls."³

¹ "Inteleixerimus quod licet . . . portiones ipsos de illis viginti marcis, quæ per Telarios ad opus nostrum annuation solvunter, juxta assessionem super ipsos operarios per dictos Telarios impostam contingentes, gratanter solvissent, ipsi tamen telarii ipsos operarios entranlos ad essendum de Gilda sud in civitate predicta, et ad veniendum ad curiam suam per varias districtiones compulerunt." *Ib.* 286, col. 2.

² "Vobis mandamus quod ipsos Egidium . . . vel alios hujusmodi operarios pro eo quod ipsi de gilda dictorum telariorum . . . non existant . . . non molestetis." *Ib.* 287, col. 1.

³ Recital in the case of Cokerage, 10 H. IV. in Madox, *Firma Burgi* 199. I have not been able to find it on the Rolls of Parliament, but there can be no doubt that such an exemption was granted. In the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* is entered, under 26 Ed. III. (p. 161): "Am-

The grant of such a privilege did not make it easier for the magistrates to keep the peace, and the government was again and again obliged to issue orders that no one shall molest the Flemings,¹ or, since attack provoked reprisal, that Flemings, Brabançons and Zealanders shall not bear arms.²

How the immigration of foreign weavers affected the organization of industry in London, it seems impossible accurately to determine. It probably hastened that decay of the guild organization which had evidently set in by the middle of the following century. There are, however, three assertions which may with some confidence be made: First, that though exempted by Edward III. from the necessity of membership of the London weavers' guild, the foreign weavers did not remain without some sort of association among themselves; secondly, that the old weavers' guild was greatly weakened by the changes, whatever they were; but, thirdly, that it succeeded in regaining the control of all those exercising the weaving craft within London.

The first is proved by a petition presented to the mayor and aldermen in the year 1362 by the "Weavers' alien."³ They ask that "three good folk of the weavers' alien may be ordained and sworn to keep

plæ libertates pro operariis pannoe' de partibus exteris infra regnum morantibus," and the weavers' petitions of 1406 and 1414 state that "le roy E le tierce, eucontre les ditz libertees et Frauchises, a l'instance et supplication des wevers aliens, estoit grauntez qu'ils serroient exempts du dite gylde, et qu'ils ne rien paierent du dite ferme."—*Rot. Parl.* iii. 600; iv. 50.

¹ In list of royal writs in Letter Book G, compiled between 1353 and 1375, in *Liber Albus* 628, 649.

² *Ib.* 642.

³ Translated in Riley *Memorials of London*, 306.

and rule their trade;" that every alien who wishes to work in the city should be obliged to present himself before these officers and prove his capacity, and that his wages should be fixed by them: and that the same officers should decide in quarrels between masters and men about wages, as well as in cases of petty larceny. Then come the ordinary guild regulations restricting night work and work on holy days. The proposed rules were sanctioned; whereupon two Flemings and a Brabanter were chosen and sworn "to keep and oversee the articles aforesaid and the alien men of the same trade."

This fellowship or mystery—it is perhaps too late to be called a guild—obviously included both Flemings and Brabançons. But Flemings must certainly have largely preponderated, and therefore we may with little hesitation identify it with "the trade of the weavers among the Flemings" spoken of in the "Articles of the Flemish weavers in London" four years later.¹ They ask that previous ordinances may remain in force; that weavers who cause affrays and are fined by the sheriffs shall pay an additional fine to their own society;² and that the bailiffs of the society shall not be allowed to summon meetings or demand contributions without the assent of twenty-four men of the trade to be chosen by the city authorities. Yet even though men of Flanders and of Brabant were united in the same body, there was a good deal of jealousy between them; hence it was that in 1370 "the commonalty of the weavers among the Flemings" petitioned for the renewal of a previ-

¹ lb. 331.

² "They shall make fine to the *chamber*." The same word is used in the document of 1362: "let him pay to the *chamber* the penalty."

ous ordinance of the magistrates which, for the prevention of affrays between the two races, had ordered that "the weavers Flemings" should meet for the hiring of serving-men, in the churchyard of St. Lawrence Pountenay and "the weavers of Brabant," in the churchyard of Our Lady Somersete. But they did not wish that there should be two rival organizations, for they asked also "that the serving-men in that trade should serve indifferently under the weavers of either nation."

The weavers' guild was the earliest, and for a long time, the most influential of all the artisan associations. But other bodies were now entering into the privileges which the weavers had won for them, and were outstripping them in the race for wealth and power. There are abundant proofs of the lessening importance of the London "weavercraft" in the later part of the fourteenth century. Thus we find that as early as 1377 they had sunk into the ninth place among the "mysteries;" and that while nine companies send six members apiece to the common council they send only four.¹ This change in their position was largely due as will be seen later, to the rise of the companies of *traders*. But it must have been hastened by the struggle with the foreign weavers, and the refusal of the latter to contribute to the guild. In the eighth year of Edward IV. the weavers' guild was four hundred marks in arrears with its ferm, but it could pay nothing and got deeper into debt till the sixteenth year, when it was released from the obligation. In the twenty-fourth year of Henry VII. it owed for nine years. And "the gild

¹List in Herbert, *Livery Companies* i. 34.

of weavers with broad looms"—which is almost certainly the same as the old guild of weavers, was again in the thirty-eighth year of Henry VIII. pardoned its arrears of ferm "in consideration of the poverty of the said artificers."¹

Yet it is clear that, somehow or other, the weavers' guild, or "company" as it came later to be called, did succeed in the end in incorporating the foreign weavers and their descendants. The evidence on the subject is very scanty: but we may perhaps gather from the mention in the *Liber Albus* of "an Arbitration between the weavers of Flanders and other weavers," and of "an Indenture between weavers, native and foreign," that some sort of agreement to this effect was come to between the old guild and the newcomers; even if as we see from frequent petitions from the weavers under Henry IV., it did not go so far as to make the foreigners contribute to the common funds.² Certainly in the reign of Queen Anne the weavers' company had the power of compelling all weavers within London to become members, a power which they exercised until the present century.³

¹ Madox. *Firma Burgi*, 195-7. Madox is not sure that "the gild of weavers with broad looms" is the same as "the gild of weavers." But neither the term *guild* or *firma* would have been used in the case of a newly formed company.

² *Liber Albus* 725, 726. The *Col. Rot. Pat.* under 3 R. I. mentions "an agreement between native and foreign weavers," though this is followed by a confirmation of the liberties granted to foreign weavers in 26 Ed. III. Unfortunately these have not yet been printed.

³ *Reports from Commissioners on Munic. Corporations, London*, 1837, 208, 210. Parties carrying on the trade of weavers in London are summoned to take up their freedom in the company, the court having the power by the charter to compel them to do so. Parties within the jurisdiction of the city generally have submitted to the

Meanwhile a new manufacture—that of *worsted* stuffs—had grown up in Norfolk; whether or no connected with the new settlers we cannot determine. In 1328, Edward issued a letter patent on behalf of the cloth-workers in *worsted* in the county of Norfolk;¹ and the manufacture was already so extensive and important that next year a special aulnager, Robert of Poley, was appointed for life, to inspect the *worsted* stuffs in the city of Norwich and elsewhere in the country.² Robert of Poley kept his office for twenty years, but, in 1348, the *worsted* weavers and merchants of Norwich petitioned that the patent should be revoked, and that the supervision of the cloth might be entrusted to their own officers; a petition which the royal council thought fit to grant “for the common profit of all estates.”³ But free trade, in the sense of the absence of regulation, does not always work well; and when, in 1403, Norwich gained a new charter, giving it a mayor and a sheriff, almost the first care of the new municipal authorities was to meet the evils which had arisen.⁴ In 1410 the commons in parliament represent to the king, on behalf of the mayor, sheriffs and commonalty of Norwich, that “*worsted*s have been recently made by the workers of them, with deceit

authority of the court, but several cases have occurred where it has been necessary to proceed by actions at law, in all of which the company has been successful.”

¹ *Col. Rot. Pat.* 103. 2 Ed. III. “Pro operariis pannorum de *worsted*s in Comitatu Norff.”

² *Ib.* 104. 3 Ed. III.

³ *Ib.* 156. 22 Ed. III. An abstract of the petition is given in “*Abridgment of the Records in the Tower*,” by Sir. R. Cotton, revised by W. Prynne, (1657), 71.

⁴ Blomefield, *Hist. of Norfolk*, (1745), ii. 88.

both in their quality and in their measure, to the great scandal and hurt of the loyal merchants of the city and surrounding country, to the hurt also of the lords, gentry and all other folk of the realm, who are wont to buy worsteds for their needs; and to the certain destruction of the merchants who pass with these worsteds into Flanders, Zealand and other places over the sea. For if the foreign merchants decided to search and measure all the worsted coming from this side, and to seize all they found defective, ordering besides severe penalties for the sellers of such worsteds, it would be a great scandal and reproof to this kingdom—and the total destruction of the merchants of the city of Norwich, who trade in nothing but worsteds. That it would please our Lord the King to consider, how, that the workers in worsted have repaired, and continually do repair, to that city and commonly to a place called the Worstedselde within the city.” They beg, therefore, that in future the power of search and aulnage should be entrusted to the mayor, sheriffs and commonalty, or their deputies. Their prayer is granted; henceforth no cloth is to be sold before it has been sealed as to due quality and size; a fee of a farthing is to be paid for each piece of one sort, and a half-penny for each piece of the other sort, the money thus obtained to go to the repair of the city walls.¹ The grant was originally made only for seven years, but afterwards renewed. At first the office of “Aulnage and Seal” was left to two citizens, who were to pay a yearly rent to the corporation;² but an act of Parliament

¹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum* iii. 637.

² Blomefield ii. 91.

of 1442 ordered that six wardens should be annually chosen to carry out the inspection.¹

The increase of the cloth manufacture in England had two great results—(1) an increasing differentiation among those engaged in the industry, a splitting up into separate crafts, sanctioned and maintained by the public authorities; and (2) the creation of a class of merchants and dealers in the finished article.

In a list of "the several Mysteries" sending representatives to the common council of London in 1377, occur besides mercers and drapers, tailors, weavers, tapicers, fullers, dyers and burellers.² It has been seen above that in 1298 the fullers and dyers were still united in one guild. In addition to these, the shearmen or toncers, who finished the cloth for sale, had apparently a separate society before the middle of the fourteenth century;³ and early in the fifteenth we find mention of the frisers, or makers of a rough frieze cloth.⁴ In York, which enjoyed a monopoly of the manufacture of cloth for the county, the division into distinct crafts had gone as far as in London. Thus in 1415 there were guilds of fullers, tapicers, toundours or shearmen, wolpackers or wadman, tailors, drapers, lynwevers, wevers of wollen, and mercers.⁵ In many other towns the craftsmen engaged in the different stages of manufacture remained united in the same organization; thus in Exeter the weavers, tuckers or fullers, and shearmen were joined together in one society through-

¹ 20 Hy. VI. c. 10.

² Herbert i. 34.

³ Riley, *Memorials*, 247.

⁴ *Liber Albus*, 723.

⁵ List in L. Toulmin Smith, *York Mystery Plays*, xix—xxvii.

out the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ But whatever the number of divisions may have been in any particular locality, the government determined that every craftsman should definitely choose his own branch and adhere to it. An act of 1363 ordains "that artificers, men of mysteries, shall each join the mystery he may choose between this time and next Candlemas, and two of each mystery shall watch that no one uses any other mystery than that which he has chosen. And justices shall be assigned to enquire by process of Oyer and Terminer, so that trespassers shall be punished by imprisonment for half a year, and shall also pay a fine to the king according to the offence."²

This was followed up by special ordinances applying to particular crafts, such as "that no dyer or weaver should make any cloth," *i. e.*, finish it for sale, and so interfere with the monopoly of the shear-men.³ We know also that the act was vigorously enforced, thus in 1385 Nicolas Brembre, the mayor, disfranchised several citizens for carrying on occupations to which they had not been brought up—haberdashers for acting as mercers, a tailor for acting as a draper, and, what is especially interesting, a weaver "for that he occupied drapery" *i. e.*, had sold cloth to the public.⁴

Similar regulations had been enforced in Flanders some seventy years before. That there was not a wider interval of time between the adoption of the same policy in the two countries, shews that England had been rapidly coming up to its rival. In

¹ Freeman, *Exeter*, 168—170.

² *Statutes at Large* (ed. 1735) i. 297.

³ *Liber Albus*, 724.

⁴ Herbert, i. 30 n.

both cases the primary object was the same—to provide for the complete supervision of the processes of production and sale. There were probably other and secondary objects in view—to secure for all engaged in the industry an equal opportunity of making a livelihood, and to ensure the possession of technical skill on the part of producers. But the necessity of control, lest goods should be ill-made and the customer cheated, is the purpose set in the forefront of the regulations.¹

III.

THE RISE OF A TRADING CLASS.

The position of the English cloth industry, compared with that of other countries, in the second half of the fourteenth century, was this: Like the industry of the Rhine and of northern France, it was rapidly gaining upon that of the Netherlands, but it had not yet surpassed in importance the manufactures alike of the Netherlands, of France, and of the Rhine, as it was destined to do in succeeding centuries. The development, therefore, is, as we might expect, exactly parallel with that of other countries; and of this development the most important feature is the appearance of a distinct class of dealers, of traders in cloth as distinguished from makers of cloth. This is a fact of the utmost importance. Nowhere but in the Netherlands had there been room for the growth of such a body before this time. There the sale of cloth had long been as important to merchants as the purchase of

¹ Schmoller, *Strassb. Tucker u. Weberzunft*, 386.

wool, and both were monopolized by the little burgher oligarchies who were united together in the Hanse of London. Now it is clear that the spirit of the guilds merchant in England was the same as that of their models abroad; whatever trade there was they would get into their own hands. It has been shown above that as early as the reign of Henry II. there was some little trade in dyed cloths, and that the ruling classes in the towns attempted to secure a monopoly of it. During the two centuries, however, which followed, the craftsmen had succeeded in gaining the rights of citizenship, and the exclusive privileges of a small governing class had passed away. Any citizen could now trade in cloth if he wished. Still it was not until the period at which we have now arrived that a special class of cloth dealers, or *drapers*, made its appearance.¹ There had been so little manufacture for any save the immediate market—the wants of the town and neighborhood—that if men dealt in cloth at all, they dealt in it together with half a dozen other commodities; they were merchants, and not dealers in one particular article.

We are so accustomed now-a-days to the appearance of a new branch of commerce, entered upon by men with the command of capital, which they are ready to make use of in any profitable way that presents itself, that the rise of the cloth trade may not seem to need explanation. But in the fourteenth

¹ Herbert, *Livery Companies*, 1, 233, says: "The Sumptuary Act, 37 Ed. III., proves the mercers to have sold in that reign woollen cloth. . . . It ordains that . . . mercers and shopkeepers in towns and cities "shall keep due sortment thereof." The act does not mention mercers at all; it mentions only "*drapers et fesours de draps*."

century there was but little of what may be termed free and disengaged capital, ready to be turned in any profitable direction. Hence the question arises, in what way precisely did this new division of occupations arise. It is antecedently probable that trade in cloth would be engaged in chiefly by men who were already in some way connected with the industry. And of these, there were two groups from either of which the new body might conceivably have arisen—the wool-dealers and the cloth-finishers. It does not appear that before this time there was any very uniform system of relations among the various branches of the cloth industry. I suppose that the weaver had usually been the most independent; that he had very generally bought the yarn himself, and then, after weaving the cloth, had paid the fuller to full and the dyer to dye it, and had sold the cloth himself to the person who intended to use it. The user might employ it in its rough state, or, as was often the case, would take it to the cloth finisher, the *pareur*,¹ or, as he is called later, the *tonsor* or *shearer*, who sheared off the nap at so much the piece.² But the weaver did not always occupy this economically superior position; sometimes he received yarn from a customer or employer, and gave back cloth, receiving so much per piece as remuneration; sometimes again the fuller bought the cloth from the weaver, or paid the weaver for working up yarn into cloth, and himself sold it to the public. Any of these branches, therefore, might

¹ The *gilda parariorum* appears among the adulterine guilds in 1180. Madox *Exchequer* 391, but is not subsequently mentioned. See Ducange, s. vv. *paravia parator* and Littré s. v. *pareur*.

² Instances in Rogers, *Hist. of Agr. and Prices*, iv. 566.

have become the dominant one. But the two mentioned, the wool-dealers and cloth-finishers, had obvious advantages. On the one hand, the wool dealer, whether he merely bought the raw wool and sold it to those who would make it into yarn, or whether he himself paid for its being beaten and spun, and then sold it to the weaver, was already a merchant with some command of capital and accustomed to commercial dealings. English dealers in wool and other staple commodities were at this time becoming an important and influential body, and were beginning to contest with the Teutonic Hanse its monopoly of export from England.¹ It is therefore likely enough that such merchants would trade in what was practically a new commodity, the cloth which was now being supplied of better quality and in larger quantity than ever before. But whatever may have been the case in other countries, there is certainly no evidence that in England the dealers in cloth came, to any large extent, from among the dealers in wool.

The other theory, that it was the cloth finishers who first ventured upon trade, has also antecedent probability in its favor. For it was through their hands that the cloth last passed; instead of waiting for a customer to bring a piece of cloth to be shorn or finished, they might see the advantages to be got by buying the cloth from the weaver and finishing it ready for the customer. As the demand increased, they would need larger stocks, and some of

¹ For the Merchants of the Staple, see Schanz, *Englische Handelspolitik gegen ende des Mittelalters*, i. 329-332. Williamson's *Foreign Commerce of England under the Tudors*, (Oxford "Stanhope Essay," 1883), is a useful abstract of Schanz's very important work.

them would probably soon give themselves up entirely to the trade. It seems very likely that this is what took place in Paris and in France generally. There, apparently, it was the fullers who caused the cloth to be put through its final processes, either shearing it themselves or employing men who sheared it for them; and it was the fullers who sold it to the general public. The term "draper" was at first used quite generally for any one making or dealing in cloth,¹ but clearly in the thirteenth century it became a synonym for fuller.² Seen first as rivals of the weavers in the sale of cloth,³ the fullers seem quickly to have got it in their own hands; until finally, in the middle of the fourteenth century royal letters patent divided the "drapers" into two classes, manufacturers and traders.⁴

What information we have in England points in the same direction. Isolated "drapers" appear in

¹ Especially for weavers, see Statutes of Weavers of S. Marcel, 1371, in Fagniez, *Etudes sur l'industrie et la classe industrielle à Paris, au xiii. et xiv. siècle.* (Bibl. de l'école des hautes études, 1877). 339. Espec. §§ 21-2. 341—Fagniez's work, useful for its references and quotations, has its value to the economic historian lessened by his unhistorical method of quoting documents separated from one another by a century or more, as if they referred to the same stage of industrial development. He has also taken from Depping the phrase "Eisserands-drapiers," for which no authority is given. Drapers appear neither in the ordinances issued by the Prévôts of Paris between 1270 and 1300, nor in Etienne Boileau's *Livre des Métiers*. So that it is impossible to suppose that a class of dealers in cloth existed at that date.

² Ib. 106 n. 1; 335, "ordonnances ancinnement faictes sur le mestier des foulons drappiers de la ville et terre St. Genevieve."

³ Ib. 234.

⁴ 1362, according to Depping, "*Réglements sur les Arts et Métiers de Paris*, 113 n. 2.

the thirteenth century;¹ but there is no certain evidence of a *body* of dealers in cloth, even in London, before 1364, the date of the first charter granted to the Drapers' company. The same charter furnishes evidence that the drapers were still *makers* of cloth *i. e.*, completed the final processes, including shearing; for the preamble complains that "dyers, weavers and fullers, who used to follow their own crafts, have become *makers* of cloth."² Moreover towards the later part of the next century, we find the fullers and shearmen in a position of dependence upon the drapers,³—paying a fee at Drapers' hall for each apprentice—that is easily explained on the supposition that the drapers had arisen from among them. The fullers were incorporated in 1480, and the shearmen had a fellowship and wardens, with certain rights of supervision; but the great companies of drapers and tailors were promised that the shearmen should not be incorporated, and they were not incorporated till 1508.⁴

This mention of the close connection between the drapers and tailors in London suggests a piece of circumstantial evidence which is at any rate curious. In several towns, as in York and Oxford, the drapers and tailors were united in the same company; but in

¹ "Pentecost le Draper," on 1222 Hist. MSS. Com., 9th Rep., 1. b.; "Gervase the Draper," end of reign Hy. III., 5th Rep., 559; "Rothard le Draper" in 1289, *Ib.* 326.

² Herbert, *Livery Companies*, i., 480; the preamble, which is very important, is omitted by Herbert; but an abstract is given in the Drapers' Company Return, in *Report of Livery Companies Commission* (1884) ii., 170.

³ Herbert, i., 426.

⁴ Abstracts of charters in Return of the Clothworkers' Company in *Livery Companies Com.* ii., 674.

Coventry the place of the drapers is taken by the shearmen, and the mystery play was presented by "the company of sheremen and tailors."¹

However we may explain their origin, the drapers certainly formed powerful companies in London and other great towns towards the end of the reign of Edward III., and in that of Richard II. The London company of drapers were not long in obtaining important rights of supervision over the industry of the capital and indeed of the whole country. Their earliest charter had given them a monopoly of the retail sale of cloth in London and its suburbs; anyone not belonging to the mystery who had cloth to sell could indeed sell it in gross to lords and commoners who wanted it for their own use, but they might never sell it retail, or even in gross to merchants not belonging to the Drapers' company.² By the purchase of a hall in 1384, the company obtained an administrative centre:³ the fact that this hall was in St. Swithin's lane shews how close their connection still was with the weavers of Cannon street. Indeed, during the next century the old quarter of the working weavers came to be occupied by dealers: in *London Lickpenny*, the best-known ballad of Lydgate, a countryman describes how

"Then went I forth by London stone;
Throughout all Canwyke street;
Drapers much cloth me offered anone."⁴

¹ *Eboracum* (1788) i., 222; *Records of Oxford*, 331; *The Pageant of the Company of Sheremen and Taylors*, Sharp, (1817).

² The translation in Herbert, i., 480 is meaningless. The clause runs: "Que nul que eit drap' a vendre en la dite cite, ou en les suburbs, ne les vende forsque as drapers enfranchiez en la dite mestier de draperie, s'il ne soit en gros as seigneurs, et autres du commune, qi les voillent achater pour lour oeps demesne, et nemie a rataille."

³ *Lie Comp. Com.* ii., 173.

⁴ *Minor Poems of Lydgate*, ed. Halliwell, Percy Soc. 106.

An important characteristic of mediæval life was the great annual fair, held usually outside the walls of towns, on the lands of great lords, or ecclesiastical bodies, who derived no small part of their income from the fee paid by each dealer who set up a booth. There were three of these in the suburbs of London; at Westminster, belonging to the Abbot, at Smithfield, to the Prior of St. Bartholomew, and Our Lady's fair at Southwark, belonging to the Prior of St. Mary Overy. Of these the first was the most important and lasted thirty days, while those of Smithfield and Southwark lasted but three. Cloth now became the chief article sold at these gatherings; the fair of St. Bartholomew was especially known as the Cloth Fair. Early in the fifteenth century the Drapers and Merchant Taylors' companies obtained the right to search all the cloth exposed for sale and to mark it according to its size.¹ The annual search at Westminster seems to have soon ceased: but down to 1737, long after the conditions of industry had altogether changed, the wardens attended year after year at Smithfield and Southwark with "the Company's standard."²

The earliest accounts in the possession of the company, those of 1415, shew that it was already a powerful body, numbering, as it did more than 100 members³—by which must be understood master drapers only, and not journeymen or apprentices. By this time, however, a considerable number of drapers had arisen in other towns; and, both for the sale of their cloth to the people of London, as well as for its

¹ Herbert 1., 427.

² *Liv. Comp. C.* 173.

³ *Ib.*

easier export to foreign countries, these began to resort to the capital. They could not fail to come into collision with the monopoly of the London drapers, and it was necessary for the government and the municipal authorities to devise some way out of the difficulty. The plan they hit upon was the establishment of Blackwell, or as it was originally called Bakewell hall, which was destined to be of the utmost importance to the English woollen industry for four centuries. This was an old hall with a considerable piece of ground around it, in Basinghall street; it had originally belonged to the Basings, had been occupied by a certain Thomas Bakewell in the reign of Edward III., and was now, in 1397, purchased by the mayor and commonalty of London and turned into a market for country drapers.¹ With the sanction of the government, the mayor or aldermen and commonalty issued in 1398 regulations to the following effect: Country drapers were to house, shew, and sell their cloth only at Blackwell hall; the sale was to be carried on weekly between noon on Thursday and noon on Saturday: and merchants—among whom aliens, *i. e.* foreigners, are specially mentioned—are not to buy from them except at the hall and within the times appointed: the penalty for the breach of these rules being the forfeiture of the cloth in all cases.² In order that the regulations should be obeyed, the common council in 1405 empowered the Drapers' company to appoint a keeper of the hall every year, a power that was exercised at

¹ Stowe, *Survey of London*, first ed. 1598, 227-9.

² Ordinances of Bakwelle halle, trans. in Riley, *Memorials of London*, 550.

any rate as late as 1526.¹ Although it is not stated in the ordinances, it is made clear by a statute of Henry IV. that the object of these regulations was to prevent the country drapers from dealing directly with the customers of the London drapers, and selling their cloth to them in detail. All the trading in Blackwell hall apparently was wholesale. But the London drapers had met with so much support from the government hitherto, that they thought they might venture to go farther, and force the country drapers to sell only to themselves. To permit this was to give the London drapers a monopoly of the cloth trade of the kingdom, and to enable them to demand what price they pleased; and therefore, Parliament, which had not yet given up the task of securing fair prices and justice to manufacturers and consumers as well as to dealers, interfered, and by an act of 1405-6, it was ordained that "drapers and sellers of cloth, like all other merchants, shall be free to sell their cloth in gross to all the king's liege people."²

The growth within England of a great cloth manufacture brought with it of necessity a complete change in the character of English trade, and in the commercial relations of this country. Up to this time she had exported wool and imported cloth; now she begins to export cloth and to limit and finally under Elizabeth to prohibit altogether the export of wool. The history of the export of cloth is closely associated with that of the Society of Merchant Adventurers,

¹ *Lie. Comp. C.* 173.

² 7 Hy. IV. c. 9, *Statutes of Realm* ii. 153. For the acts, the whole of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the translation which is of later date, and uses later terms, cannot be relied upon.

the parent of all the later trading companies which won for England her commercial supremacy. It is not necessary here to enter in detail into their story, especially since it has been carefully worked out by Schanz.¹ It need only be understood that they derived their names from their adventuring on trade in new directions with new commodities; that they were never tied down to one or a few places like the Merchants of the Staple, and that their organization was of the freer and more modern character of a chartered company instead of resembling that of a guild. It was not only in the cloth industry that the second half of the fourteenth century had seen the appearance of a class of large traders: the *merciers*, originally pedlers of small wares, had become merchants, trading principally in silk, the pepperers had become *grocers*, *i. e.*, engrossers or wholesale dealers in spices. The sermon-writer Armstrong looks back in 1519 to the time "before the getting of the narrow sea and Calais," on to a golden age: "there were no such sort of buyers and sellers of all things as now is * * * * then were not merciers, grocers, drapers, nor such occupations named."² These three trades had as early as the end of the reign of Edward III. risen to be the first among the London companies; in other towns they occupied a similar position; and it was from members of these three trades that the body of Merchant Adventurers arose towards the end of the century. At first the Merchant Adventurers were mostly merciers, and their connection with the

¹ *Englische Handelspolitik* i. 332 Seq.

² Pauli, *Drei Volkswirtschaftliche Denkschriften aus der Zeit Heinrichs VIII.* (Abh. d. K. Gesellsch. d. Wissenschaften, Göttingen, 1878), 44, 45.

London Mercers' Company was closer than with any other body. But soon, if not from the first, cloth became the chief article in which they traded. This was so much the case that when in 1601 the secretary of the society wrote its history, he described it as actually originating in the intention of Englishmen to export the fine cloth beginning to be made in their country. His description of the company is worth quoting: "It consisteth of a great number of wealthy and well experimented merchants, dwelling in diverse great cities, maritime towns and other parts of the realm, to wit: London, York, Norwich, Exeter, Ipswich, Newcastle, Hull, etc. These men, of old time, linked and bound themselves together in company for the exercise of merchandise and seafare, trading in cloth, kersie and all other, as well English as foreign commodities vendible abroad."¹

In the next thirty years they created a considerable trade with France, Spain and Italy. But the chief interest of their history turns on the struggle between the English and the Flemish cloth industry. The "staple town" of the Merchants of the Staple had been Bruges, so that it was natural that the Merchant Adventurers should at first make it their centre also. But Bruges was one of the three great cloth-making towns of Flanders—Ghent, Bruges, Ypres—and every sort of difficulty was thrown in the way of the English traders. The Merchant Adventurers in consequence, gradually removed to Antwerp in Brabant,² where there was no considerable cloth manufacture. They were favored by political

¹ John Wheeler, *A Treatise of Commerce*, (1601) 10, 19.

² Schanz i. 9, 442.

events; the murder of John, Duke of Burgundy, in 1419, led to a close alliance of the Burgundian house with England until 1434. But by that time the great success of the Merchant Adventurers had disabused the Flemings of the idea that English competition would not injure them if only English merchants were forced into an adjoining province. The Burgundian princes were in the moods to listen to the complaints of their subjects, especially as they were already beginning the attempt to unite their Netherland provinces more closely together, and could not be blind to the disastrous consequences of the destruction of Flemish industry. Accordingly in 1434 the importation of English cloth into the Netherlands was prohibited entirely.¹ The English government replied by prohibiting the export of English wool. And although during the last century new sources of wool supply had arisen—notably, in Spain—such a measure was able seriously to embarrass the Flemish manufacturer.² On the other hand it was opposed to the interest of the landed class in England—the growers of wool, and of the Merchants of the Staple—the exporters of wool. Hence it was difficult for either the English or the Burgundian government to follow a consistent policy, and the varying necessities

¹ *Ib.* 443.

² The author of the *Libel of English Policy*, written in 1436, is doubtless right when he says to the Flemings:

"The grete substance of your clothe, at the fulle, Ye wot ye make hit of our Engliche woole," and of Spanish wool.

"Hit is of lytelle valeue, trust unto me, wyth Engliche wolle but if it mended be." *Political Poems*, Ed. Wright, Rolls' Series, ii. 161-2. For proof of the superiority of English to Spanish wool as late as 1438 and 1441, Macpherson, i. 654-5. See also references in Hildebrand, *Jahrb. für Nationalökonomie*, vi. 199, n. 54.

of York and Lancaster or of the Burgundian rulers in their hostility to France, led to temporary relaxations on either side. But in 1496 England was successful, and by the *Intercursus Magnus*, Henry VII. gained the free entry of English cloth into the Netherlands. The result, hastened by the religious troubles of the Netherlands, and by the renewed immigration of foreign weavers under Elizabeth, was the destruction of the Flemish industry, and the rise of the English cloth trade to this unique importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

IV.

THE GROWTH OF THE DOMESTIC SYSTEM.

For the history of industry during the first sixty or seventy years of the fifteenth century, we have singularly little evidence. Yet during that period a complete change was taking place in the whole character and conditions of manufacture. The guild system was dying and the domestic system was taking its place; a change which can only be compared in its far reaching consequences to the overthrow, during the present century, of the domestic system itself by the strength of machinery and great capital.

So entirely does a prevailing method of industrial organization take possession of men's minds, that the very term "domestic system," which was familiar enough in the early part of this century, has become strange, and may require explanation. But, in order clearly to indicate the nature of the domestic system and of the transition to a new order of

things, it will be necessary to leave for a time the direct narrative of industrial facts, and to enter upon rather more general considerations.

Recent economic historians have traced four stages in the development of industry—stages through which all parts of industrial society have passed or are passing—and it is now generally the custom to describe these as the family system, the guild system, the domestic system and the factory system.¹ In the first, the work was carried on by the members of a household for the use of that household. Whether the household were that of the villain, or that of the great noble or ecclesiastic, did not alter the essential character of the relations thus created, which was, that men did not work to meet an outside demand; there was no sale.

In the second stage, industry was carried on by small masters employing two or three men (distinguished later as journeymen and apprentices). The masters very often bought the materials and sold the finished goods, *i. e.*, he was a shopkeeper as well as an artisan. But even where the craftsmen received the goods to be worked up from a customer, and was paid so much per piece for his work—as was probably usually the case with fullers and shearmen—even then he had to deal either with craftsmen in much the same position as himself, or with persons who intended themselves to use the commodity on which his labor was spent. There was a market, *i. e.*, there was a demand from persons outside the family, but it was small and comparatively staple.

¹ Thun, *Die Industrie am Niederrhein* ii. 246; Held, *Zwei Bücher zur Sozialen Geschichte Englands* 541, *seq.*

In the third stage, which, in England, occupies the period from the middle of the fifteenth to the middle of the eighteenth century, many of the terms remained the same. There were still small master-artisans, with journeymen and apprentices; the work was still carried on in the master's or the journeyman's own house, and the craftsmen were personally free as to their daily actions. But the master had lost his economic independence, and no longer acted as a shop-keeper or merchant. He often received the raw material from, and always gave up the finished goods to a merchant, factor or middle-man of some sort, who took the risk of the fluctuating demands of that greater market, which had now come into existence.

In the fourth, the workmen are gathered together in great masses, usually in one building, under the immediate control of a capitalist employer. Technical skill is now far less important than capital; the workman has completely lost his industrial independence, and the market is increasingly wider and more fluctuating.

These stages must not be regarded as rigidly distinct, any number of intermediate arrangements were possible and are to be found. Nor are the terms which are used to distinguish the four stages anything more than convenient expressions. For instance, so large a proportion of manufacture was organized in the guild system, that that term may be fairly used to describe the industry from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the fifteenth century. But, in some occupations, while there was a sufficient demand to induce men to give up their time entirely to a particular sort of labor, there could never be a

demand sufficient to call into existence a body of such craftsmen in a particular district, large enough to form a guild.¹ Thus, most villages had blacksmiths, but only in the largest towns could there be a blacksmiths' guild. Probably in the woollen industry, isolated weavers and other craftsmen maintained themselves throughout this period in out-of-the-way places, without belonging to any organization; and this, in spite of the efforts which the town guilds made in England, as in other countries, to prevent the exercise of their craft in the country districts.² In these cases, the individual craftsman would be without the support and control of the guild, but the essential characteristics of his position were the same as that of the guild members. His capital was very small; he dealt directly with the customer; there was no social gulf between himself and the two or three men or boys he employed.³ It must be noticed also, that even when a particular organization of industry is dominant, there often exists side by side with it, arrangements belonging to an earlier type. Thus to-day, the overwhelmingly larger part of the staple products of England are made in factories, mills, or "works." Yet here and there are still found men "working for themselves" and dealing

¹ Even in such a town as Colchester, there were in 1305 only eight (master?) weavers, six fullers and three dyers. Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages*, 121.

² Thus the York weavers had a monopoly for the county; those of Nottingham for ten leagues around; those of London in places pertaining to London, a phrase wide enough since Henry I.'s charter to cover Middlesex.

³ Hence it might be well to follow those German writers who have used the term *Handwerk* and to speak of *Handcraft-system*, but this might lead to confusion with the state of things which followed.

directly with the customer, just as in the fourteenth century. It is still more frequently the case that men work in their own homes, but "for some shop;" and here the conditions are in the main those of the seventeenth century. But these are survivals, and with the invention of machinery displacing skill, and the increased cheapness of carriage which favors the larger centres, will tend to disappear. Similarly we find, in the previous period, that though the domestic system became the prevailing one in England's great industry—the manufacture of cloth—and to a lesser degree in all the other important manufactures, the guild system, under the later names of crafts, mysteries and companies, or as part of the law of municipal corporations, still lingered in the towns. But it was moribund, or where active, active only for evil.

We may conjecture that a two-fold process went on in the fifteenth century, (1) that in the towns, the guilds or companies became small close corporations and lost control over the industry; (2) that the industry spread from the towns into the country, and that there a new class of men called *clothiers* or *clothmakers* arose, commanding an amount of capital great relatively to previous conditions, and bringing into dependence upon themselves comparatively large numbers of workpeople.¹

To take the first of these points: (1.) The guild system could only retain its vigor so long as it opened a career to all industrious craftsmen, so long as it en-

¹ Cf. similar development on the lower Rhine, in Thun i. 16-18; and for complaints of the extension of industry to the rural districts as late as 1775, Schmoller, *Zur Geschichte der Kleingewerbe in Deutschland*, 15.

abled the average journeyman to rise in due course to masterhood, and himself employ his couple of journeymen and apprentice. But in the later middle ages there was a strong tendency for the masters to become a close corporation of privileged families, into which the entrance of the journeyman was rendered difficult by heavy fees and burdensome conditions. When the journeymen are found forming separate societies and the masters anxious to suppress the new bodies, it is clear that the journeymen could no longer have felt that the old guilds protected their interests as well as those of the masters. Such separate organizations are found in several crafts at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century.¹ It is perhaps significant that the earliest example of such divergence of interests is found in 1350 among the shearmen; for an ordinance issued by the guild of shearers in that year complains that when a dispute arises between a master and his man "such man has been wont to go to all the men within the city of the same trade, and then by covin and conspiracy between them made, they would order that no one among them should work or serve his master until the said master and his servant had come to an agreement."² This adds some probability to the suggestion already made that the class of traders known as drapers arose in the main from among this craft of shearmen; masters already standing in such a position of social superiority to their men, would be likely enough to turn their attention to trade. We have, however, more direct evidence,

¹Riley, *Memorials of London*, 495, 543, 609, 653. Cf. Brentano, Essay in Toulmin Smith, *English Guilds*, cxlv-cxlviii.

²Ib. 247.

of the transformation of the craft-guilds into close corporations in the series of statutes with which the government endeavored, though in vain, to prevent the change. The first of these was passed as early as 15 Henry VI. (1436-7):¹ "whereas the masters, wardens and people of several gilds, fraternities and other companies incorporate, oftentimes, by colour of rule and governance, and other terms in general made to them, granted by charters and letters patent of the king's progenitors, make among themselves many *unlawful and unreasonable ordinances*, as well of such things whereof the punishment cognizance and correction only pertaineth to the king, lords of franchises and other persons, as also of things which often of confederacy are made *for their singular profit and common damage to the people*, they are to bring all their charters and patents before Michaelmas to be registered before the justices in the country and the chief governors of towns. And in future they are not to make any ordinances not previously approved of by the authorities, and recorded by them, to be afterwards revoked if found unreasonable." This statute was renewed in 1503-4 (19 Henry VII.) with the significant change that the power of control was given not to the town magistrates, who probably were themselves interested, and could not be trusted, but to the chancellor and chief justices. Both these enactments are expressed in such general terms that if they stood alone we might remain uncertain as to the evils against which they were directed. But the act of Henry VII. is appealed to in a later statute,

¹*Statutes of the Realm*, ii. 298.

that of 22 Henry VIII. c. 4. (1530),¹ which goes on to declare that since that time, and "contrary to the meaning of the act aforesaid," certain wardens and fellowships have demanded heavy fees from apprentices, ranging from three shillings and four pence to forty shillings, "after their own sinister minds, and to the great hurt of the king's true subjects putting their child to be prentice." Henceforth, it is enacted, they shall not take more than two shillings and six pence, "for the entry of any prentice into the said fellowship," nor more than three shillings and four pence "for his entry when his years and term is expired." But these "good and wholesome statutes" were "defrauded and deluded" by a new devise; the wardens "causing divers prentices or young men immediately after their years be expired, ere they be made free of their occupation, to be sworn upon the Holy Evangelist at their first entry that they . . . will not set up nor open any shop, house or cellar, nor occupy as freemen, without the assent and license of the master wardens and fellowships of their occupations, upon pain of forfeiting their freedom."² So that six years later it was enacted that no such oath should be imposed, and no payments enacted beyond those previously fixed. But this measure was as unsuccessful as those which preceded it. It became increasingly difficult for a poor man not connected by birth or marriage with a company to become a master craftsman, and all men of any energy of character would try to leave the towns and carry on their occupations under freer conditions.

¹Ib. iii. 321.

²28 Henry VIII. c. 5. *Statutes* iii. 654.

Still the guilds or companies might in England, as in Germany and France, have continued to exert very considerable influence in their own neighborhoods, and might have delayed and hampered the growth of industry in rural districts. But they were reduced well nigh to impotence by the confiscation of their estates, on pretence of superstitious uses, by the ministers of Edward VI.,¹ a fate from which only the London companies were able to escape. The guilds had been the friendly societies of the middle ages, and the proceeds of their estates had been spent largely in payments to sick members, in portioning their daughters, apprenticing their sons pensioning their widows and the like. Robbed of their funds the guilds could no longer fulfill one half of their previous functions: the very real benefits which the fully free members enjoyed; the occasional assistance which even the journeymen sometimes probably obtained, could no longer be looked for. Associations which had lost the power to benefit, were not likely to be able to exercise with any force their powers of coercion.

(2) It is when we turn to the industrial conditions which took the place of the guild system, and to the agricultural changes with which the transition was accompanied, that we begin to understand how great a part the woollen manufacture has played in Eng-

¹ 1 Edward VI., c. 4. *Statutes* iv. 24. Attention has been called to this by Rogers, *Hist. of Agric.*, iv. 5. *Six Centuries* 347: who, however, does not seem to attach sufficient weight to the consideration that the benefits derived from the guild estates were at this time probably almost monopolized by small groups of families. It must be noticed that we do not know the actual course and results of the confiscation in any particular district; evidence on the subject must be in existence, but I believe it has never been printed.

lish social history. For the extraordinary and rapid success of the industry brought about not only the downfall of the guild organization, but also a far-reaching change in English agriculture. Now that there was a constant and increasing demand for wool, it became the interest of the landowners to raise sheep rather than to grow corn, especially as the great increase in the cost of labor since the Black Death had already made tillage unremunerative. The writers of the sixteenth century, and modern historians following them, have dwelt on the far-reaching consequences of the introduction of pasture farming, the superfluity of laborers, the amalgamation of farms, the increase of rents, the dispossession of customary tenants.¹ What we are here specially concerned with is the fact that the development of the cloth industry helped partially to alleviate the evils it had itself caused, by giving employment to those whom the agricultural changes deprived of work. Indeed, the wealthy graziers were themselves very commonly clothiers also, in the sixteenth century; the wool grown upon their own land, they employed men and women of the neighborhood to make into cloth, and then sold it to the London drapers or dealers.² And it must not be forgotten that

¹ See especially More's *Utopia* and Latimer's *Sermons*. A catena of quotations from the 16th c. writers is given in Schanz, i. 466 seq. Of modern writers, see espec. Nasse, *Agric. Community of Middle Ages*; Ochenkowskig, *England's Wirthschaftliche Entwicklung*. 35 seq.; Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, b. iv., c. 2.

² Thus the French Herald is made to say, in the *Debate between the Heralds*, by the Englishman John Coke, secretary to the company of Merchant Adventures: "In England your clothiers dwell n great farms abroad in the country, where, as well they make cloth and keep husbandry, as also grass and feed, sheep and cattle." *Debat des Herauts d'armes*, (pub. Société des anciens textes Francaises, 1877) p. 105. See also quotations in Schanz, 606.

where peasant proprietorship and small farming did maintain their ground, this was largely due to the domestic industry which supplemented the profits of agriculture.¹

Of the early history of the domestic industry, we have no information; when it is first noticed in public documents, it seems to be already widely spread over the country. The central figure to be studied in the new organization of labor is the clothier. He buys the wool, causes it to be spun, woven, fullled, and dyed, pays the artisans for each stage in the manufacture, and sells the finished commodity to the drapers. Much confusion has been introduced into the subject by the lax use of terms by all writers since the sixteenth century. Familiar themselves with the action of "clothiers," they have used that term in treating of previous periods for anyone who had to do with cloth, mixing together weavers, cloth finishers, drapers and clothiers, without hesitation. But just as there is no evidence of a body of traders before the middle of the fourteenth century, so there is no evidence of a class of capitalist manufacturers 'till towards the middle of the fifteenth century.² For the new clothiers were not primarily concerned with one branch of the manufacture, they were not artisans who bought cloth in an unfinished state, or dealers who bought it finished, they arranged for every stage of the manufacture; and, though

¹ Cf. Toynbee, *Industrial Revolution*, 65.

² This is probably true for France and Germany also. Schmoller (*Tucher-u-Weberzunft* 411), refers to the regulations of 1308, at Amiens, as showing the dependence as early as that date, of spinners, weavers, dyers and fullers upon drapers. But the drapers or clothiers are not mentioned in that document, in which, indeed, there is nothing to show that such a class then existed.

the actual amount of capital which many of them could command must have been small, they certainly occupied the position of capitalists in relation to the artisans, whom they employed in large numbers, and to whom they gave work as they chose.

The altered conditions are clearly enough indicated in the statutes passed to deal with certain evils, on the part of the clothiers a cheating method of payment in commodities, and the fraudulent reckoning of material, on the part of the employed the embezzlement of material. The act of 4 Edward IV. runs thus :

"Whereas, before this time in the occupations of cloth-making, the laborers have been driven to take a great part of their wages in pins, girdles and other unprofitable wares.....and also have delivered to them wools to be wrought at very excessive weight, whereby both men and women have been discouraged of such labor, therefore it is ordained.....that every man and woman, being cloth-makers, shall pay to the carders, carderesses, spinsters and all other laborers in any part of the said trade, lawful money for all their lawful wages.....and shall also deliver wools to be wrought according to the due weight thereof. Also it is ordained, that every carder, carderess, spinster, weaver, fuller, shearmen and dyer, shall do his work duly in his occupation, on pain of yielding to the party aggrieved double damages."¹

A contemporary poem describes the same evils :

"An ordynaunce wolde be maad for the poore porayle,
That in thyse dayes have but lytyll avayle,
That is to sey for spynners, carders, weavers also
Ffor toukers, dyers, and shermyn therto.

"For in thyse dayes ther is a hewsauce
That puttyth the pore pepylle to grett hynderaunce
By a strange mene that is late in londe
Began and used, as y undyrstonde.

¹ *Statutes* ii. 405. Half a century later the prohibition of truck was renewed by 3 Hy. VIII. c. 6, (*Statutes*, iii. 28) which mention all the stages of manufacture : "Every clothier or other person who shall put or deliver to any person any wool to break, kembe, card or spin, or yarn to the weavers to webbe, or webbe to the fullers to fulle, walke or thikke," etc.

"By merchaundes and clothmakers, for Godys sake take kepe,
The wyche makythe the poreylle to morne and weep,
Lytell thei take for thyre labour, yet halff is merchaundyse;
Alas! for rewthe, yt ys gret pytè."¹

Hall's account of the popular discontent in 1525 and 1528 proves that in the districts in which the clothmaking industry was then chiefly carried on, the southern and eastern countries, the craftsmen were universally dependent on the clothiers. Heavy taxation and the cessation of foreign trade is represented as causing the clothiers to "put from work" great bodies of men and women, who are left without means of subsistence, and whose only resource is rebellion.² It was in vain that Wolsey endeavored to bully the drapers into buying from the clothiers stocks of cloth of which they knew they could not dispose.³ Substantially the same relations existed, it is clear, between employers and employed as appear at the end of last century in the eastern and western counties—what the report of 1806 calls "the system of the master-clothier of the west of England."

Now there can be little doubt that the impulse towards this extension of a freer industry into the country was given primarily by the new mercantile capital which successful trade had created. This is indicated among other evidence by the mention of "merchants" by the versifier quoted above, by the frequent complaints against foreign merchants,⁴ and by the charge against the Merchant Adventurers, that they had "caused foul cloths to be made in

¹ Wright, *Political Poems*, Rolls' Series, ii. 285.

² *Union of Lancaster and York*, (ed. 1809), 699-700.

³ *Ib.* 745. Cf. Brewer, *Henry VIII.*, 261.

⁴ E. g., against the merchants of Italy 1 Ric. III., c. 9 *Statutes* ii. 489.

England for low prices, to truck and barter them for merchandises in other countries."¹ But when once the movement had begun it would be followed by all who saw their opportunity, by woolstaplers, by drapers, by landed proprietors, by energetic artisans from the towns. The requisite labor would readily be found in the unemployed of the agricultural districts, and the necessary technical skill could be acquired from the journeymen whom the jealous restriction of guild privileges by the master-artisans had driven from the towns.

Limitations of space prevent the present sketch of the history of the woollen industry from being carried farther. Otherwise it would have been interesting to trace the regulations of the Tudors as to the quality of cloth and as to apprenticeship, and to consider how far these were dictated by the jealous endeavors of the town craftsmen to hinder the growth of the industry in the country, and how far they were guided by a wise policy on the part of the government which aimed at maintaining a certain standard of work.² For the social history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries much still remains to be done. The introduction of the "new draperies" with the second immigration of weavers from the low countries under Elizabeth,³ with which began what has been called the "Norwich period" of the cloth industry,⁴ has still to be investigated in detail; so has also the growth of the industry in the western counties

¹ Armstrong's *Sermon* in *Pauli Drei Völkens. Denkschr.* 65.

² See for one view Held, *Zwei Bücher* 27; for another Schanz, 607 seq.

³ The old distich ran, "Hops, Reformation, *Bays* and Beer, came into England all in a year."

⁴ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 85.

and in Yorkshire.¹ Towards the history of the eighteenth century more has been accomplished, but the interest increases as we come nearer to our own time, and the various elements in the economic development have never yet been shewn in their relation to one another. The appearance towards the end of the seventeenth century of a new class of factors and great merchants;² the abandonment under mercantile pressure of the policy of preserving the quality of cloth;³ the growth of credit;⁴ the struggle between the woollen and cotton interests;⁵—all these preparing the way for the factory and machine industry of to-day—are of the most vital importance for the social history of England. But for the present we must be content with having traced the earlier stages of the long evolution.

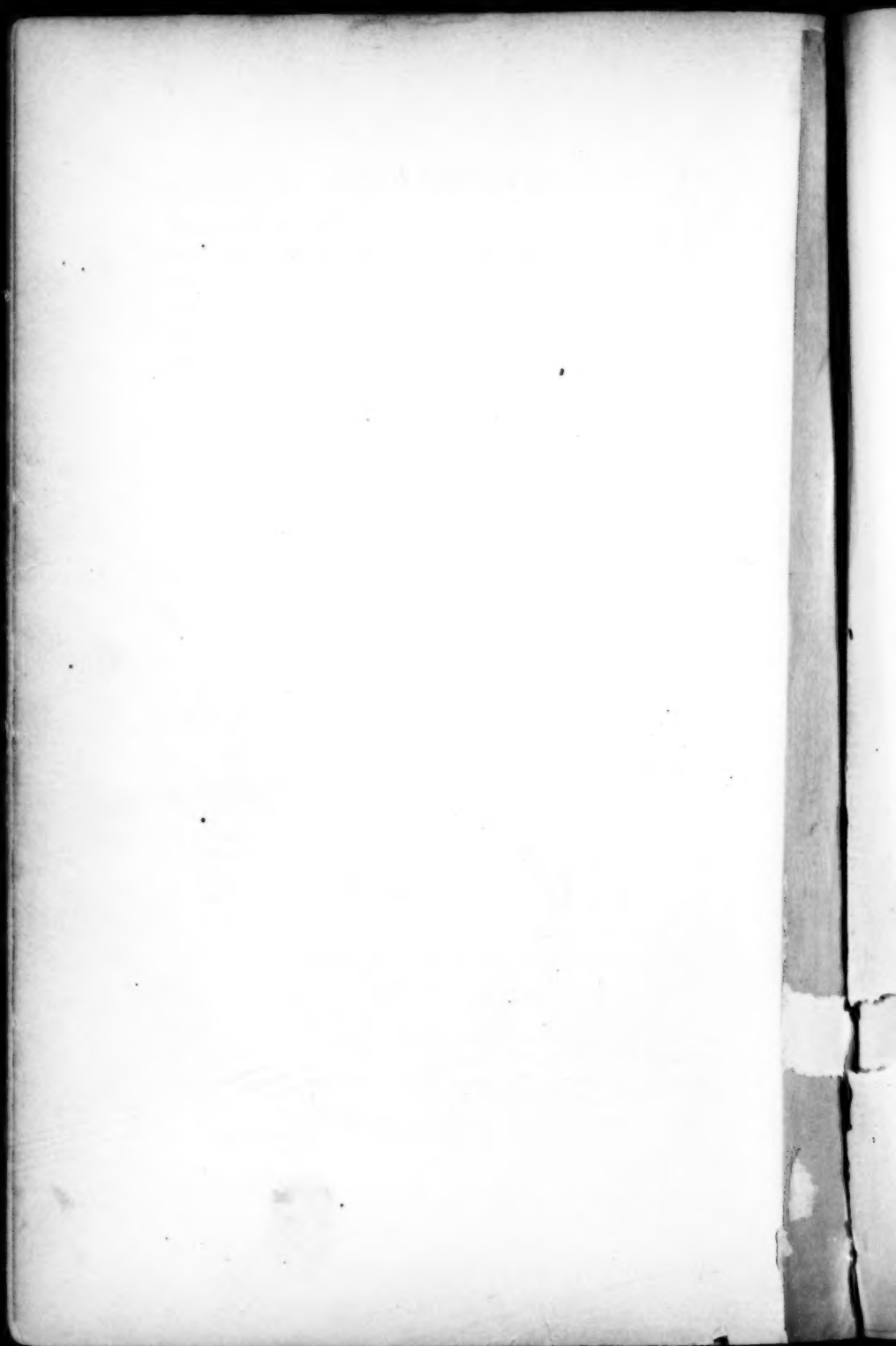
¹The act of 25 Henry VIII., aimed at preventing the making of cloth for sale in Worcestershire outside the towns; and Yorkshire with Northumberland and Cumberland was excepted from two and three Php. and Mary c. 11, limiting the number of looms and apprentices of weavers.

²A tract *England's Improvements* (1677) quoted by Smith, *Memoirs of Wool*, i., 318, says: "The Factors, Drawers and Packers are now turned merchants, and the trade is ruined by them. Formerly it was you Clothiers and we Drapers, and now it is another thing."

³Sir Josiah Child, *Trade and Interest of Money Considered* (1693) 131: "All our laws that oblige our people to the making of strong, substantial and loyal cloth, of a certain length, breadth and weight, if they were duly put in execution, would in my opinion, do more hurt than good; because the humors and fashions of the world change * * * * If we intend to have the trade of the world, we must imitate the Dutch, who make the worst as well as the best of all manufacturers. * * * * Stretching of cloth, by tentors, though it be sometimes prejudicial to the cloth is yet absolutely necessary to the trade of England."

⁴For illustrations of the use of credit, see Defoe, *Complete English Tradesman*, 352, 356, 358.

⁵Held. 505 seq.



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TWO CHAPTERS
ON THE
MEDIÆVAL GUILDS
OF
ENGLAND.